

Instructions
For the
WHOLE YEAR.
PART I.
FOR
LENT.
BEING

Practical Thoughts on the EPISTLES
and LESSONS from *Ashwednesday*, to
Tuesday in Easter-Week.



Printed in the Year. 1695.

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Instructions

For the
WHOLE YEAR.

PART I.

F O R
L E N T.
B E I N G

Practical Thoughts on the EPISTLES
and LESSONS from *Ashwednesday*, to
Tuesday in *Easter-Week*.



Printed in the Year. 1695.



THE PREFACE.

IT is needless to entertain the Reader here with Proofs of the Institution of Lent being Primitive and Apostolical: those, who are vers'd in Antiquity, trace the steps of it thro' all Ages of the Church; and for such whose leisure or Learning is not sufficient to carry them so far back, they may abundantly satisfy their Curiosity in this Point, by perusing Books on this Subject; and tho' I could suggest variety of Catholick Authors to this Purpose; yet I shall at present recommend One of another Communion, which being in English, may be more acceptable to the Ordinary Reader, and that is

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the Learned Volume of The Paschal or Lent Fast, Published in the Year 1662. by Peter Gunning, D. D. afterwards Bishop of Ely, who in the very Title styles it Apostolical and Perpetual, and thro'ought the whole, proves the Church to have observ'd this Lent-Fast, ever since the times of the Apostles; that they deliver'd it to the Faithful, and observ'd it themselves. p. 24. 26. and this by the Consent of the Generality of the Fathers in the first Seven Ages after their Decease; and therefore concludes it to be a Tradition Apostolecal. p. 131.

And now having mention'd this Book, wherein are so fully treated all those Points, which of course ought to make up the Preface to the following Instructions, I think I shall not at all impose on the Reader, if I present him here with an Abstract of this Treatise, and I am confident, do no disservice to my self,

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self, since the full Prospect of Antiquity, as there given must necessarily dispose him to be more Favourable to all that follows.

This Learned Author then having fill'd near an hundred pages with the concurring Testimonies of all Antiquity, witnessing the Paschal Fast of Lent to have been ever observ'd in the Church, as from the Apostles, and from Evangelical Instruction; then sets down the Rules of Lent or Principal Conditions necessary to render this a Fast acceptable to God and such as he has chosen.

These Conditions or Rules of a Christian Fast p. 173. are 1. That our Fasting be as the Church at first design'd it, a great instrument of our great work of Repentance from our Sins; of judging our selves; that we be not judged of the Lord; of more instant mortifying all sinful lust's and affections, forasmuch as Christ has suffer'd for us, and we,

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if with him we suffer in the Flesh, must cease from Sin. 2. That our Fast be truly Fasting, not a Commutation only of our usual Diet for other delightful fulness, refectiōns and pleasures. 3. That Fasting be not sever'd from its antient company of Watchings, hard-lyings, Sorrowings, Sequestration of ornaments and publick joyances. 4. That in our fasting, our bowels relent from all hard oppression of others. 5. That it abound in works of Mercy. 6. To make our Fastings Subservient to our more instant Prayers, as our Bodies to our Souls; for a time giving our selves to attend on fasting and prayer and more frequent hearing of God's Word. 7. More particularly take we care in this time of the abstinence of Lent, to prepare our selves for the Lords Holy Table at Easter, to which it is instituted as a Preparation. Lastly; That all this your good be not leaven'd with
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the leaven of vain Glory and Hypocrisie.

Every one of these Conditions, necessary for the due Observance of Lent, he proves at large both from Scripture, consent of Fathers and the Practice of the Primitive Church; shewing all Fasting to be unprofitable, which is not accompanied with Repentance, Forsaking of Sin, Prayer and Good works; and that 'tis nothing less than Mocking God, to abstain from Flesh, and at the same time to indulge the Appetite in other delightful food; for that this is dealing deceitfully with the Lawgiver, and therefore condemn'd as a great abuse both by Antient Councils and Fathers. p.187. That therefore the true Christian Lent ought to be Penitential, by afflicting and bringing down the Body; as being a Season of joynt Fasting and Penance; wherein not only Publick offenders, but Secret also; even

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the whole Congregation join in **Hu-**
miliation for their Sins. p. 185.
and therefore ought not to be observ-
ed by Fasting only, but in other
Mortifications of Watchings, Sack-
cloth, Hard-lying, Mourning:
For this the Consent of the Univer-
sal Church in all the parts of the
Earth has confirm'd. 198. And
this to answer all the Purposes of
Fasting, which he thus describes:
Fasting is a Denying our selves
lawful Refreshments, for having
not denied our selves in unlawful
Desires; A real judging our selves
worthy to be Punish'd, that we be
not judged; and afflicting or punish-
ing our selves, (Ezra 8. 21.)
judging our selves also unworthy
(and executing on our selves, for
some time, that Judgment) of the
wonted Blessings created of God for
Man to enjoy, for our former in-
ordinate Enjoyments of them, and
our other Offences against God. 183.
Thus

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Thus he describes Lent to be a time of *Accusing*, *Judging* and *Condemning* our selves *Worthy* to be punished, and executing this Judgment on us, that so we may escape the severer Judgments of God. Having declar'd these Conditions for the due observance of Lent out of *Antiquity* in above forty Pages, he concludes this Point with a Testimony of *St. Chrysostom* in his *Homilies*, in which they are all Summ'd up together: For what cause therefore, some may say, Do we keep the Fast of these Forty days? ——— That in these Days, all of us being perfectly purified together by Prayers, and by Alms, and by Fasting, and by whole Nights Watchings, and by Tears, and by Confession, and by all other Things, we may so according to our Power, with a Pure Conscience, come to the Holy Mysteries;

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(the Sacrament) Pag. 213.

Then to recommend the observance of **Lent** more effectually to the Faithful, he sets down in about twelve pages, the large Commendations of the **Primitive Fathers**, give of **Fasting**, viz. That **Fasting** prepar'd **Moses** for the receiving the **Law** from the **Hand of God**; and for his second receiving it, he needed a second **Fast**. That **Samuel** and **Sampson** were the **Fruit** of their **Mother's Fasting**: **God** having prescrib'd it to **Sampson** and his **Mother**, before he was born. By **Fasting** **Daniel** was prepar'd for **Heavenly Visions**, secur'd from the **Lions**, and the three **Children** from the **Fire**. **S. John Baptist's** whole life was one **Fast**. **Our Lord** by **Fasting** fortified himself against the assaults of the **Devil**. The **Apostles** were continually as it were **Fasting**. By **Fasting** the **Enemy** is overcome; for our **Saviour** has said concerning the

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the Devil; This kind is not cast out but by Fasting and Prayer. By voluntary afflictions the flesh dies unto lusts, and the Spirit is renew'd unto Virtue. Fasting gives victory against Concupiscence, repels Temptations, takes down Pride, mitigates Anger, and nourishes the affections of every good will unto the maturity of entire virtue. Fasting is the purity of the Heart, the preservative of the Soul, the exercise of Spiritual Wrestlers. There are Angels, which in every Church write all those that fast, neither dares the insolence of Devils any thing against such as fast, and the Angels, the Guardians of our life, do with more studious labour abide with such, who have purified their Souls with fasting. Fasting makes the young Man sober, the old Man reverend, the most fit dress of Women, a bridle for those, who are in the flower of their Age, the custody of Marriage, the nurse of

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Virginity. Fasting is our assimilation unto Angels, it transforms on a sudden all the City, it quiets noise. In the time of the fast, what lascivious company can have allowance? filthy Songs and outrageous Dances suddenly depart the City, being chased thence by fasting, as by an austere Judge. Fasting is the Nurse of all good order, the Mother of Sanctity, the Imitation of Angelical conversation, fountain of Temperance, beginning of Continence, the Serenity of our Souls. This is the Character he gives of fasting, out. of S. Ambrose, Leo, Basil, Cyril, Chrysostom, and then in his own words concludes: Fasting seems the flower of Temperance, the chastisement of Intemperance, the exercise of Corrective Justice on our selves, the cutting off occasions of Injustice towards others, the Understandings clearness, the Wills emendation, it is the Body of Piety, which serves
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the Soul and Spirit of inward God-
liness; Beati qui lugent, Blessed
are those that mourn: and then
proceeds to give the reasons, why fast-
ing rightly perform'd deserves such
great praises.

I. For the honour of the Divine
Holiness of God our Father, who,
without respect of persons, will
judge every Man, that judgeth not
himself; and is most faithful in his
promises of mercy; we judging our
selves, he will not judge us; we ab-
horring our selves in dust and ashes,
he will not abhor us.

II. For satisfying God's gracious
Will, who will accept much less of
corrective chastisements, when so
voluntarily by our selves adjudg'd,
and inflicted on our selves, than
otherwise.

III. For the preventing of the
hand

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band of God executing his anger against our sins in temporal judgments, as we see in the example of St. Paul, of Ahab, and David: and when these cannot be prevented, neither in whole nor in part, yet even so shall this return into our Bosom for greater reward hereafter.

IV. It is a great help and degree, and external part of our contrition (proceeding from the inward) which consists of four holy Passions in one compound, viz. A holy sorrow for what is past. A holy anger and indignation at our selves; A holy fear of God's judgments; a holy hatred or detestation of our sins: now all these four are exercis'd as well as witness'd in these self-afflictions; it is that wise indignations, and only lawful revenge of a private Christian, mention'd by St. Paul, 2 Cor. 7. It is a work of Justice corrective upon our selves.

V. As

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V. *As it is a wholesome degree of our Contrition, so is it also of our Confession; it is not a verbal, but a real practical Confession in deeds, an humble acknowledgment more than by words only, that we are by our sins unworthy of God's good Creatures and of his Blessings, (by denying unto our selves even Food and Pleasures and Rest and Ornaments; in fastings, watchings, lying on the ground, in Sackcloth, &c.) and worthy of his judgments. It is also a due Confession, that we suffer justly what we do otherwise also perhaps from God's own Hand. They humbled themselves, and said God is Righteous.*

VI. *It is for our future emendation, and securing us from returning to the same sin again, which hath caused us so to smart; the pleasure whereof we have been inforced*

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forced to avenge on our selves by so severe sharpness of pain, or affliction for mortification of the flesh.

VII. Beside the fear of a repeated smart, otherwise also available it is, for the better taking off our Hearts from the love of the World, while we stand so long by our own counsel sequester'd from the contents, enjoyments, and blandishments of the world and flesh. And so the Mind hath better leisure and temper and serenity to make a truer judgment and estimate of the excellency of Heavenly things.

VIII. With God, who hath promis'd to give Grace to the humble, these humiliations, for the very humility thereof and therefrom, are a powerful means to obtain his inward Grace and Guidance. Ezra. 8. 21.

IX. By

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IX. *By them we may procure deliverances and blessings to others also, some way concern'd with us (or more than us perhaps) in the dread of some judgment of God upon sin.*

Here being thus declar'd by this learned Author at length. 1. The Authority of this Holy Institution of Lent. 2. The manner of keeping it: 3. That being thus kept, it is a work, to which the Scripture has directed us, the Church of the Saints ever practis'd, and God has chosen and will reward openly. And lastly, The Reasons, why it is so accepted of God and profitable to our selves, p. 235. He afterwards in his Appendix confirms the whole with the concurring Sentiments of four Bishops; Andrews, Cosins, Whitgift and Montague. And tho he acknowledges many Modern Authors to be of another Opinion; yet I pre-

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prescribe, *says he*, against any number of Moderns of one smaller part of the Christian World, and of one or two Ages farthest removed from Antiquity, (except where Authority of our own Church, to which we have subscribed, doth interpose) such Testimonies, I say, standing alone by themselves, Antiquity that approaches nearer the Fountain, not being first heard, both to interpret Scripture, and testifie of Tradition (where that is part of the Controversie;) all such weak and trifling process of Arguments from Testimony, I take to be but Tyranny over Mens Judgments, who are bound to none but to God's Word, who is Truth, and the Churches Witness, whom he has set to be the Pillar of Truth; whose witness is best learned from Antiquity, and Universality of Practice,
and

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and Consent of her Pastors of the Ages required ; and to Submission of Acquiescence to their own Church in such matters. p. 542. *Excellent Reasoning, had it not been mixt with that Resigning Parenthesis.*

And now having here given the Reader a whole Book in the Preface, wherein he is inform'd of every material point belonging to this Holy Institution, I think I need add no more, but my hearty Wishes, that this Fast were universally observ'd, as here directed ; tho' with my wishes I offer the Pious Reader the following Instructions, which may be some help for the better performance of this Duty, in conformity to its first Institution. They are seasonable Thoughts on the Epistles and Lessons, generally applied to the obligations of this Time; not as I call my own such ; but what I have observ'd, collected and even sometimes translated out of

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of other Books, as I apprehended them capable of contributing to the publick good. They carry not *Permissum Superiorum* in the front, but have all the *Approbation* necessary thus to recommend them, and therefore not to be censur'd on that score; and on any other, there can be made any just exception; I appeal to the Reader's Charity for his most favourable Construction; and desire him to do here, as at a plentiful Table, make use of what he likes, and pass by the rest, not forgetting, that 'tis sometimes an ill Stomach or prejudic'd Phancy, that gives a dislike to wholesome Meat; and in this case, an over-hasty censure would be his fault and not mine; but 'tis what I pardon; and therefore, whenever I stand in need of it, I hope he'll do as much for me.



Instructions

FOR

LENT.

I.

Of Shrove-Tide.

Qu. **I** Desire here to be inform'd concerning the due keeping of Lent: but first let me know, what Shrovetide means; and whether the General Practice of Christians at that time, be according to the intention of the Church?

Ans. Shrovetide was intended, as a Preparation for Lent; For this being a most Solemn Fast, wherein the Faithful, are encourag'd, by Prayer, Humiliation and Self-denials to turn away the Anger

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of God, and make Atonement for their Sins; 'twas very reasonable, they should enter into this course of Penance with due Reflection and Preparation. For this end, it was design'd, on these Days of *Shrovetide*, they should seriously turn their Thoughts to the Work before them, and by an Humble Confession, so far reconcile themselves with God, as to hope for his Grace for their assistance, and that their Mortifications and Fastings thus Offer'd from a clean Heart, might find acceptance in his sight.

Q And is it thus People generally employ this time?

A. This is the Practice of great numbers, especially those, who best understand their Duty: 'tis to this Method the Church invites all, and is very careful in giving all encouragement to the Faithful thus to prepare for *Lent*. For this end, on Shrove-Sunday is read the Gospel, of Christ Going up to Jerusalem, there to be Scourg'd, mock'd, spit on, and Crucified; that so by the consideration of Christ's Suffering for Sin, every Christian, renouncing his evil ways, may effectually think of seriously applying himself to such Means, as may be proper for his having a part in that General Release being discharg'd from his Sins. The design of the Church is, that



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by the Exercises of Repentance and Piety on those days the Faithful should dispose themselves for the due observance of Lent.

But now as for the Practice of too many, who then give themselves up to all manner of Gluttony and Excess, and think they make ill use of their time, if they are not swallowing till the Clock striking Twelve, tells them tis Ash-wednesday Morning; this is what the Church abhors; and 'tis most certainly, an unwarrantable Custom, built on nothing but the Relicks of Heathenism, and having nothing now to support it, but the Weakness of some and Vice of others.

For what can be more preposterous, than by intemperance to prepare for Fasting? Is not this to go into the Church, to pretend to Worship the Living God; but first to stop in the Porch, and offer Sacrifice to Idols? The Church commands us to keep Lent, and in obedience to her Orders, they pretend to chastise their Sins, and offer up Self-denials for the appeasing the wrath of God: what then have they to do with rioting and intemperance? Why, in the very Entrance of that Holy time, do they run back to Infidelity, and in all manner of extravagancies, make their Shameless Offerings to Bacchus? If they

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were call'd to Six weeks Liberty and Prophaness; Gluttony and Drunkenness, might be a Seasonable Preparation: but being summon'd to Mortification and Fasting; how abominable are these Excesses! Did ever any one, desirous of being reconcil'd with a Person, whom he had injur'd, make choice of his Profess'd Enemy to become his Advocate? Drunkenness is an Enemy to God, says St. *Basil*, and if thou desir'st to make thy peace with him, flee all manner of intemperance, for otherwise thou addest new provocations, and draw'st greater vengeance on thy own head.

We may conclude then, that this is a Practice to be detested by all serious Christians, and that, whatever pretexts are brought to favour it, they are nothing better than the Flatteries of Weakness, and deceitful disguises of downright Impiety: and without any great Spirit of Prophecy, we may foretell, that such as begin Lent with these extravagancies, however they may observe a Pharisaical Fast as understanding little of the true Spirit of Penance, will very likely be found with the same unmortified Passions at Easter, as were their Directors in the keeping of Shrove-tide: Whilst other more Pious Souls, considering the true motives for their observing of Lent, and the

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the difficulty of their keeping it well, decline all occasions of this most Scandalous intemperance, and wholly turning themselves at this time to the Exercises of Piety and Humiliation, thus endeavour to obtain that Grace, which is necessary for the due performance of the Fast enjoyn'd: And this is to proceed according to the intention of the Church.

II.

Of Lent.

Q. For what ends is the Fast of Lent commanded to be kept?

A. **T**Here are several. 1. As we are commanded to offer to God the Tenths of our Goods; so 'tis but just we should pay him the like Tribute, as to what regards the Time of our Life. And for this end Forty days are set apart, which are, as it were, the Tythe of the whole Year. 2dly. That Christians, falling into many sinful Liberties, and hurtful Excesses throughout the Year, might, in this Forty-Days-Fast, accompanied with Alms and Prayers, have something to offer to God, in Expiation and Punishment of their Offences, especially, if united to that Satisfaction, Christ made on the Cross, in the name

of all Sinners. 3^{dly}. That by this Six-Weeks Mortification, the Faithful might be duly prepar'd for the worthy Celebrating the Memory of Christ's Passion, and the Great Festival of Easter. For certainly, to take part in the Cross of the Son of God, is most proper for such as desire with any advantage to meditate on his Sufferings: And if they think of Rising with Christ, how can they do it better, than by suffering with him? For these Reasons has this Fast been ordain'd; it having been first sanctified in the Persons of *Moses* and *Elias*, and afterwards by the Son of God, who all fasted Forty Days.

Another reason may be, of the Apostles and Church enjoining this Fast, To put us in mind of that *General Fast*, which is necessary, in this our State of Infirmary, for the support of Vertue, and performing due Penance for our Sins. For since our *greatest Danger* arises from the *violent Inclination*, born with us, towards Creatures; and all our *Offences* are nothing else, but the Forsaking our Creator for the love of these; there can be no Vertue, where there are not resolute Endeavours for the diminishing and checking this Concupiscence, by Fasting or separating our selves from those Creatures, which are a Snare before

fore us ; Hence 'tis a necessary consequence , that he that loves Pleasure , must deprive himself of Pleasure ; he that loves Riches, Gaming or Honours, &c. must here deny himself ; because this Separation weakens the violence of the Impressions those Creatures made on the Soul , and sets it at liberty to fix it self on better Objects ; and in this General Fasting or Privation , is the exercise of Solid Virtue. This same is the method of true Penance ; for the general ground of all our Sins, being the immoderate love of Creatures , what better atonement can we make , than by depriving our selves of them ? Our Sins oblige us to do Penance , and this cannot well be , where there is not a sincere desire of offering some Satisfaction to the Divine Justice, in a manner proportion'd to our Sins : and what other proportion like that, of Punishing by the Privation of Creatures , those very Sins committed in the enjoyment or abuse of Creatures ? Thus this *General Fast* , which consists in this Privation or Self-denial , is necessary for all, as the best Satisfaction for past Offences, and as the Greatest Security of Virtue, in defending it from those Weaknesses , which are the unavoidable consequences of corrupt Nature, as likewise of all vicious Habits.

Now this Fast of the Church from *certain Meats*, seems intended for the engaging us more strongly in this *General Fast*, which is the Separating our selves from the objects of our passions; For being commanded to deny our selves *certain Meats*; because through the course of the Year we too often offend in them, through our Intemperance; on the same grounds, we must conclude it just, to practice a like Self-denial in regard of as many Objects, as we experience either to be the Occasion or matter of our other Transgressions: and without this, the keeping Lent will be but very imperfect.

III.

Of the Manner of keeping Lent.

Q. *I see then, Lent, is not an outward Form only; but that it is to be accompanied with many interior Mortifications: but for my direction, pray tell me, what things I am to observe, for the keeping it, as I ought.*

A. **T**He Principal rules for all Fast-Days, are, 1. To eat but one Meal a day, and that not of Flesh: nor of Whit-Meats, but as allow'd; without taking the liberty, as some do, of eating

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eating Fruit betwixt Dinner and Collation, as if this did no injury to the Fast; and this Meal ought to be manag'd with such moderation, that it be not made up of those choice and expensive Dishes, which provoke to Gluttony, and seem rather fit for Luxury and Banqueting, than for Fasting and Mortification: how sparingly this ought to be, may be apprehended from the Second thing requir'd, which is *Giving to the Poor*; all the ancient Fathers supposing so much Frugality on Fast-days, that the Expence being much less than is usual on other Days, there may be something considerable laid by, to give to the Poor. But if things be so order'd, that one Meal on a Fast-day costs as much as two on another; let every one's Conscience answer, whether this be their Fault or no; and whether the Favouring Irregular Appetites, with unnecessary and costly Provision, be not too often the occasion of thus exhausting the Stock of the Poor. The Third and Chief thing on all Fast-days, is to keep a more than ordinary Watch on the Soul, so as to avoid all Sin and the Occasions of it; and employ the time, as far as Circumstances will permit, in Praying, Reading, and doing good Works. These are the Principal Rules for the due observance of Lent, and other Fast-days.

IV.

What Dispensations in these Rules of Lent.

AS to the First of these Rules, that is, of Eating one Meal a Day, and that not of Flesh, there's a Necessity of dispensing with many, on account of Sick-ness, Infirmary, and other Circumstances. And here while many are indiscreetly rigorous with themselves, and far greater numbers too indulgent, I can give no other direction, than for every one, whose Case is not evident, to have the Judgment of some Honest and Conscientious Physician, or some other experienced Person, and laying his Determination before his Spiritual Director, then accordingly to desire his Dispensation: For tho' Physicians, &c. may Declare, what is Necessary for Health; yet none can Dispense with the Precepts of the Church, but the Pastors of it.

Q. Then being regularly exempted from Fasting, they are not oblig'd to the observance of Lent?

A. As far as they are dispensed with, so far they are at Liberty, and no farther: Hence it may be the case of some,
for

for particular Reasons, to have leave to eat Flesh at Dinner, and yet still be so far tied to the Rule of Fasting, as not to exceed one Meal in the Day: whilst others, upon other Indispositions, may be wholly exempted from this Rule of *Lent*. But however it be, these ought not to forget, that it is *Lent* still; but consider, 'tis a time of Chastising Sin, a time of Humbling Sinners, and disposing them for the finding Mercy with God; and as they have a concern in this, so they ought to be Solicitous, not to lose the benefits of this time; but being disabled from using the ordinary Methods, not to be wanting at least, in such other ways, which may be most proper, according to their Circumstances, of coming to the same End, that is, in Doing Penance for their Sins, and using all endeavours for obtaining the Mercy of God.

Let them therefore look on themselves, as the Time requires, to be in a State of Penance, and keep that strict Guard, as not to permit in themselves any thing, that is not truly agreeable to that State. How many Mortifications and Self-denials might they thus find every day, to offer up to Almighty God? 'Tis but carefully distinguishing betwixt *Necessity* and *Humor*; betwixt *Duty* and *Self-love*, and these will present themselves in good plenty.

plenty. How many might there be in the point of Diversions, as to Cards, Plays, Visits, Conversation? How many as to unnecessary Expences? How many as to the Government of the Senses, the Tongue, the Eyes, &c. as to the Passions, in prudently moderating them; in passing by Injuries; in quietly submitting to Contradictions, with infinite other Occasions, which daily offer, and in the good use of which, a Person, tho' incapable of Fasting, might yet answer all the purposes of *Lent*, and find acceptance in the sight of God.

As to the Second Rule of *Lent*, which is *Giving Alms*, there can be no other Dispensation, but only Inability: For as to all other Persons, whom God has bless'd with Plenty, the Holy Fathers unanimously agree, that Relieving the Poor is so essentially necessary to their Fasting, that without it, they judge it almost unprofitable and fruitless before Almighty God. *S. Augustin* is very positive in this, *Serm 65. de Temp.* Imagine not, says he, that Fasting alone is sufficient to heal the Wounds of Sin: No, you must accompany it with Alms; and while you Chastise your self, be careful to bring comfort to your Neighbour: then will you find the benefit of your Austerities, when you open your Bosom,
and

and pour forth your Heart in the Relieving others, &c. St. *Ambrose*, *Chrysostom*, &c. all concur in this. But now as for such, whose Stock will not reach to this, yet may they have still some other sort of Alms, wherewith to assist their Neighbours in distress. To visit the poor, Afflicted, or Sick, is a great Charity; to read some good Book to them, to give them good Advice, encourage them to Patience, &c. to instruct them, when ignorant; (and who is not ignorant in those circumstances?) is a very considerable Alms. These sort of Charities then ought to be the Exercise of every good Christian, especially in *Lent*; and such as cannot give other Alms, ought to be more diligent and bountiful in these.

As to the Third Rule, which is, of avoiding Sin and its Occasions, and living virtuously in *Lent*; this admits of no Dispensation, but is absolutely necessary, for as many as desire to Fast like Christians, and not as Pharisees: so that all those, who strictly observe the Direction of the Church, as to *Fasting from Meat*, and at the same time go on in the track of their accustom'd liberties, taking no care to *Fast from Sin*, must be certainly condemn'd for Pretenders to Christianity, and not esteem'd True Professors of it; they are Unprofitable Fasters,

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Fasters ; and their best Character , is, of being like the Unhappy *Israelites*, after their Separation from the House of *Judah*, who at the same time were Worshipers of the True God and of Idols too.

For this reason it is, Almighty God , in Scripture, Summoning the people, by his Prophets , to Fasting , requires of them likewise a true change of Heart , and conversion from Sin ; and that on these Terms , they are to find mercy: Be converted to me, says our Lord, with your whole heart, in Fasting, in Weeping and Mourning ; *Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and return to the Lord your God ; for he is Good and Merciful.*

Joel 2. A Conversion of the Heart, and Forsaking of Sin , is to be joyned with Fasting : and then Mercy may be expected : but Fasting alone without this, See how it is rejected by Almighty God, *Isa.* 58. Where he expressly declares to the *Israelites*, that while they pretend to humble themselves in Fasting , and at the same time mortifie not their own Wills , but walk in their own perverse ways, in their ways of Contention and Strife, and Severity against their Neighbour, &c. that such is not a Fast to be regarded , or any ways acceptable to him : and that except they turn from their Sins, and let their Fasts be accompanied

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panied with Works of Mercy, of Piety and Goodness, their Fasting and Praying will be in vain.

This same Doctrin is urg'd every where by the Holy Fathers: The Christian Fast, says *S. Ambrose*, which is a help to our Salvation' consists in this, that while we mortify our bodies by abstinence from meats, we be careful to avoid all Sins, which can defile our Souls. Let us then early in the morning beg mercy for past offences, and watching over our selves, desire grace to offend no more: Let our chief employment all the day be in Prayer and reading good Books: let no worldly Actions interrupt the course of our good works; let neither Gaming nor Hunting &c. divert us from our Converse with God. *Ser. 33.* Christian Fasts, says *St. Augustin*, ought to be observ'd more according to the Spirit, than the Flesh. The principal part of our fasting is to abstain from Sin, that so we fall not under the reproach of God, as the Jews did in their fasting. *Ser. 172. de temp.* To abstain from certain Meats says *S. Basil*, is not the True Fast, except we joyn with it a regular and good life, and shew it in our words and conversation. Think not, says *S. Chrysostom*, as many do, that Fasting is only to abstain from eating all the day: 'tis not this that is enjoyn-

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enjoy'd us, but that in fasting from Meats that are forbid, we at the same time, avoid every thing that can be prejudicial to our Salvation, and spend our time in the exercises of virtue.
Ch. 8. in Gen.

Thus you see from Scripture and Fathers, that however there may be Dispensations, as to the other parts of Lent, there can be none as to this; but that all are alike oblig'd to it; and that whatever rigours are us'd in the points of Fasting, 'tis all but mockery and pageantry, except care be taken at the same time to mortify all disorder'd Passions, and irregularities, whether in thoughts, words or actions: For, if we abstain, says *S. Agustin*, from things that in themselves are lawful, how much more reason have we to abstain from all sins, which are at all times unlawful?

V.

What Abstinence as to Wine &c.

TIs evident in antiquity, that Wine was no less forbid on Fasting days than Flesh: but for many ages it had been allow'd whether in consideration of human weakness or for the support of age, or because Water was not every where wholsom. And since there is

is this Indulgence of the Church, it must certainly be lawful to make use of it. But then this ought to be done with moderation, to comply with the necessity of Nature, as *Timothy* did by *S. Paul's* Order, and not to satisfy the importunity of a disorder'd Appetite: For certainly, as often as Christians meet together, in Lent or other Fast-days, and give themselves, as is too usual, to Mirth, Past-time and Drinking; tho' there be no such thing as coming to the height of excess, yet this is absolutely contrary to the Design of the Church, &c. Because tho' all this be consistent with one Meal a day, and so is no direct breach of the First Rule of Lent; yet inasmuch as it is an indulging of an ill Habit, the yielding to a corrupt, if not vicious, inclination, the occasion of unprofitable, and even prophane Discourse, of ill Example to others, an unnecessary Expence, a loss of Time, a dulling of the Spirits, an indisposing of the Soul, and making it unfit for Prayer, and other Works of Piety, 'tis most certainly contrary to the other Two Rules, and makes void all the good Intentions of the Church, which designing Lent for Mortification and Penance, and the retrenching all Vice, cannot but look on those as useless, ungovernable, and unsound Members

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Members, who thus abuse it, in following their Passions, and turning it to Idleness, Prodigality and Excess, and are therefore guilty of a great Injustice to themselves, as being wanting in a great Duty they owe their own Souls; whilst being commanded to use means for the mastering their own Corruptions, and satisfying the justice of God, whom they have offended; they so manage it, as even to add to their Evils, to promote what delights, and give new provocations to Heaven; and thus unhappily render themselves incapable of those advantages, the Church design'd for them, and judg'd necessary for their obtaining God's Mercy, and opening their way to Salvation.

VI.

What allowances as to Collation.

ANtiquity knew nothing of Collation, besides those Spiritual Conferences, us'd after Complin, or in the Evening, for the refreshment of their Souls; but as for the Eating at Night, now in practice, 'twas then unknown; and has been since permitted, in consideration only of Human weakness, which, being favourably judg'd as generally not suffi-

sufficient to hold out the four and twenty Hours with one Meal, has therefore the allowance of a small repast at Night for its support. And it being thus understood in the nature of a Dispensation, this may serve to direct the Faithful, what measures they are to take in a thing, in which the Practice is so very different. For being thus consider'd as a condescension to Human weakness, it ought to be so far, and in that manner made use of, as the necessity of every one's Constitution seems to require. And from this head, it is plain, how far they transgress in this point, who, at Collation, have a Table set forth with all manner of Varieties, the Choicest Fruits and Sweet-Meats, &c. which in their Delicacy and Expence are very unsuitable to the frugality and severity of the Time; and are only a contrivance of those, who employing their Wits in the aid of their Appetites, endeavour to elude all the pious Institutions of the Church, whilst keeping within the bounds of what, they think, is allow'd, are however so Costly and Curious in preparing it, that they seem rather to consult, what most flatters their Palate, than what Necessity requires, or may be seasonable to relieve Nature, without feeding Luxury and Concupiscence.

On

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On the same grounds likewise is the Temper of those to be reprov'd, who are ever enquiring, the extremity of what may be permitted of every thing on Fasting-days, as to *Quantity* and *Quality*: for tho' this shews some desire of not Transgressing; yet it expresses so great an inclination of Favouring the Appetite, as much as may be, that they seem little sensible of that true Spirit of Penance, proper for that time, which is not for enquiring, how much they may spare, but how far they may, in Prudence, punish their Sins. And therefore, tho' there may be several things not absolutely forbid on those days, as *Chocolate*, &c. and other things customary in many places, as *Gruels*, *Tarts*, &c. yet certainly to go farther in these things, than Necessity of Constitution requires, is not expedient; because on Days instituted for Mortification, 'tis very reasonable we should mortify our selves; and not seek to gratify our Appetites, when our only business is, to make Nature hold out.

I say not this to raise scruples in any, but to make them so sensible of their Duty, that they may not lose those considerable advantages, the Church designs for them in their observing of Lent: That they would keep their Eye,
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the whole course of this Time , on that Principal End propos'd to them , of Punishing and taking just revenge on their past Transgressions , for the satisfying God's Justice; and likewise so order their Self-denials, as to render them *Medicinal*, by moderating all Passions, and mastering Concupiscence , thus to prevent the like disorders for the future. 'Tis to these ends is to be directed the whole Body of their Actions , throughout the time of Lent ; by these is to be regulated their Eating , Drinking , Conversation , &c. and nothing to be sought or allow'd of , which bears not some proportion with them. 'Tis from this Rule Christians must take their measure of whatever they do in this Time : and a very passing glance will suffice to inform any, that is serious , how much is to be cut off , of what is too generally practis'd , not only as to the excess of Dinners and Collations , but as to Entertainments, Drinking , Diversion , Gaming, Plays, Idleness, with much more of this kind ; which are wholly unsuitable to the Spirit of the Church , and contrary to all the Ends she proposes ; inasmuch as they are the Suggestions of Self-love and Corrupt Sense , and are most effectual for the strengthening all worldly Inclinations : and what then have these
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to do with the Time of Penance and Lent?

This consideration I earnestly recommend to all, as being not only every ones private interest, but even the Common concern of Christianity, to bring it more into practice then it is. For certainly there is scarce any one Primitive and Apostolical Institution more in decay than this, whilst the Precept and Name remaining, there's little, as to the Substance and first design of Fasting left. Whoever reads the Collects and other Prayers of the Church, in time of Lent, and observes, what frequent mention is there made of *Chastising the Body, of macerating the Flesh, punishing and mortifying our selves, for the remedy of Sin, for the healing of all our wounds caus'd by excess, and rooting out our vices &c.* will easily perceive the Sense of our Pious Predecessors as to this holy Institution. But where is this to be found in the general practice of most, who so order their Eating and drinking, as not to be sensible of any *Chastising or macerating*; and so go on in the course of their usual liberties, that there's more danger of opening new wounds, than healing the old? And is it to go on thus? What's then become of the Primitive Spirit? 'Tis certainly brought into a narrow compass
of

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of Faithful Souls, who breaking thro,
all present abuses, look back to the first
instituition, who make Lent a time of
Penance and Piety; who are discreetly
severe in Punishing, diligent in Watch-
ing, Fervent in all Exercises, Liberal
in Giving and every way Solicitous to
be just to God and themselves, in o-
mitting no opportunity in this time, of
Honoring their Maker and benefiting
their own Souls. 'Tis these we must en-
deavour to imitate; for this end I have
given these short instructions, as to
Fasting in its whole extent: now I will
give some help as to a seasonable enter-
tainment of Piety, and hope it will be
beneficial to those that use it.

Ash-

Ashwednesday.

ON this day Ashes are blessed, and the Sign of the Cross made by the Priest on the Forehead of all the Faithful, saying to each; *Memento Homo, quia pulvis es, & in pulverem reverteris.* Remember man thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return: that so being made sensible of what they are at present, and what they are to be, they may enter upon Lent with the Spirit of Humility; resolve to punish their past sins, not bearing the presumption of Dust and Ashes having been in rebellion against their Lord; and firmly conclude, to prepare, by a course of Piety and Penance, against that day, when the Soul shall be summon'd before its Judge, and the Body return to dust.

The Lesson.

Joel C. 2. V. 12. and ending V. 19.

Turn to me, says our Lord, with all your heart, in Fasting, and weeping, and mourning. Hear how the Mercy of God calls upon us this day. He knows
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we are in sin ; he knows all those dreadful consequences, which attend sinners : that Hell is waiting to devour them ; that their portion, is, to be banish'd Heaven, to be companions with devils, to be in misery and torments for all eternity. Therefore the voice of Mercy calls aloud after them this day ; *Turn to me*, says our Lord ; forsake your perverse ways, that so you may escape all these evils that are before you.

But how must we return to Thee ? *With all your heart, in Fasting, in Weeping, and Mourning.* These are the Conditions to be perform'd by as many, as desire to lay hold of the Mercy that is offer'd. We must turn then to God ; and because we have many ways of Turning to him, which are very unprofitable ; as by our weak Desires, our imperfect Repentance, our barren Resolutions, our Speculative and fruitless Devotions, by which and many other ways, we make a shew of doing our duty, and seem to Turn to God ; but in reality deceive the World and our selves : Therefore it is, we are now out in mind, not to content our selves with these imperfect attempts, but sincerely to Turn to God with all our hearts : and, believe me, Christians, this is none of the easiest tasks, since it

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includes an entire Change of the Heart, a turning it from all those Creatures whatever, which are the Occasions of our Sins, a detestation of all those Customs, Practices, Actions, Discourses by which we generally offend: a Hatred of what we Naturally love; a Flying from what we most desire, a daily Practice of what we most dislike; and continual endeavors to overthrow and destroy that in us, which our Corrupt Nature has made most dear to us, that is, our own Will. All this and much more of this kind, the *Turning to God with all our hearts*, includes and necessarily supposes. Now how often may we profess at our Prayers, that we Love God, how often may we strike our breasts, and say, We Repent and detest our sins for God's sake and desire to leave them; and yet never thus truly Turn to God with all our hearts? And why? Because we have a way of saying things over, and making protestations of what we seemingly purpose and resolve to do, without ever seriously considering, what we profess or reflecting on the Means necessary for performing what we undertake; we too easily content our selves with Words and Forms, and Turning our Thoughts to God, but very seldom take the pains sincerely to turn our Hearts to him. *They*

these lame Devotions, these shuffling and treacherous performances of your duty in a matter of so great concern, the Church desires you now to call to mind with all the seriousness possible, and so to make use of this holy time, we begin this day, as in it to make amends for all past neglects, to repair all the breaches of your Souls, to regain the ground you have lost, and by sincerely turning to God with all your hearts, satisfy for the many times you have so deceitfully turn'd to him.

But for the carrying on this work the better, we are here commanded to add *Fasting* to these our endeavors; and we cannot doubt, but he that requires it, knows how necessary it is for us, it being no other than God himself: and I cannot but fear, tis for want of this, we so often miscarry and even repent but by halves. The reason seems plain; for, on the one side, the evils, to which we are subject, are so very Stubborn, and our ill Habits so strengthn'd within us, that they will not forsake us, unless forc'd away by Violence, and even driven out, as the Traders were from the Temple by our Redeemer, that is by Scourges: and then we, on the other side, are so favourable to these our own misfortunes, and find them so agreeable to our Corruption,

tion, that tho' we are easily brought to declare in their disfavor, and in words to renounce them, yet we seldom heartily make war against them, except we first smart for't, and by our *feeling*, are made Sensible, how great Evils they are. Hence it is, for the Turning with all our hearts to God, we are commanded to Fast, to mortify, and punish our selves, to the end, that by these chastisements, we may apprehend something of the grievousness of sin; that we may begin to be in earnest: and when we perceive, what our sins cost us, we may not be so easie in relapsing into them again. 'Tis the Cheapness of our Repentance, makes us so soon stand in need of a New one; whereas, did we punish according to justice, every sin we commit, we should stand more on our guard, and not so easily open our arms to that, which brings such a sting at the end of it. We are yet not so perfect, as to be mov'd altogether by Love, to our amendment; no, our Servile Nature obliges us to make use of Fear too; and we must feel the punishment of Sin, for our more effectual avoiding it: and 'tis this we are called to.

Let us then this day begin to enter into this method prescrib'd us by God himself: and if we have hitherto too often offended our Creator, to please and gratifie

gratifie our selves, let us now by denying our selves, endeavour to satisfie for those offences: If an indulgent easiness in yielding to our own inclinations, has been the occasion of our sins, let now a discreet Severity be the punishment of them: Let the general Rule of this holy time be, to seek, not what may please, but what may punish: and if Nature should grieve and be uneasy in being thus contradicted, let her grieve on and be troubled, tis fit it should be so; for as her delight has been in our crimes; so her grief will be at our amendments: the more she grieves, is a sign of our having yielded to her too much; and convinces us of the necessity we are under of contradicting her now. Let us be exact then in our Fasting, tho' Nature likes it not; let us bridle our Inclinations, tho' Nature spurs them forward: let us fight against our Passions, tho' Nature encourages them. Let us on every side take part with justice, and strive to punish that, which justly deserves it. For who knows, but God will turn favorably to us and pardon our offences! But let us then add Mourning to our Fasts, and every day renew our sorrow for our sins; let us, from the consideration of an Offended God and our own Unworthiness, endeavour

daily to draw tears of Contrition, and the Sighs of an Humble heart; let this practice be the constant Companion of our Fasts, that so we may hope for pardon. And why should we not begin this even now? Humble then your souls this day before our Lord, and cry out aloud to him for mercy: *Parce Domine, Parce populo tuo*-Spare us, O Lord, spare thy people: Cast not us off for ever: We have sinned we have done unjustly; but behold now from this moment we desire to return to thee with all our hearts, in fasting, in weeping and mourning: Deal not with us, O Lord, according to the sins, we have committed; nor punish us according to our iniquities. Remember not our past offences; but let thy mercys make hast to prevent us, for we are poor and miserable. Help us, O God, our salvation: for the glory of thy Name deliver us, and shew us mercy in the pardon of our sins.

Thursday

Thursday

Before the First Sunday in Lent.

LESSON.

Isaiah C. 38. V. 1. ends V. 6.

THE Prophet *Isaiah* came to *Hezekiah* and said to him; *Thus saith our Lord; Put thy house in order, for thou shalt die, and not live.* This Sentence of Death is pronounc'd against every one, and the day is certainly fix'd of our going out of this world: but is our house in order? Are our Souls truly dispos'd to submit to this Sentence? Happy they, who have this work done before hand: What a Comfort will it be, when the day of Departure comes! 'Tis this Happiness the Church, a Pious Mother, designs for all her Children: This day they have notice given them, like *Hezekias*, that they must die, and not live; 'tis now she bids them put their house in order, and employ this Holy time to prepare their Souls against the Summons comes.

And how can they better prepare, then by the usual Self denials prescrib'd in Lent? By Death we are to be separated from all Creatures; and those will most certainly with greatest ease submit to

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this,

this, who, in their life time, learn to bear this Separation, by denying themselves the use of many things, to which their Nature seems strongly to incline them. They who do thus, die by degrees, and thus separating themselves from creatures, will find less difficulty, when their General Separation comes; for having practis'd every day, the Parting with some, they will not be so strangely surpris'd, when they are commanded to part with all.

The greater misfortune will be of those, who having liv'd a life of liberty and ease, and so generally indulg'd themselves on every side, till the World and Creatures have gain'd an entire Possession of their hearts. For what a Confusion must it be, when at the approach of death, they must, against their wills, be torn from all. who of themselves have not known the way of leaving any? And how great will their misery be, who carrying these violent Affections with them, shall find even these become their torment, in having an Eternal Desire of Creatures, joyn'd with an Eternal Separation from them? Others there may be, whose Affections are not so criminal, as these, but still exceeding all the bounds of moderation, are far from being Innocent; and if they depart,

depart this life, with their Souls in this disorder; what afflicting delays will they find in their expected Happiness; and what lasting Sufferings must they undergo, before they are truly purified and fitted for heaven?

O, how will both these sorts, when the hour of death draws near, miserably bewail their misfortune, of being so ill prepar'd for't? How will they then sensibly apprehend the ill consequences of all their irregular and misplac'd affections, and then too late begin to wish, they had sooner practis'd the lesson of Dying, and learn'd by degrees to die to Creatures, before they were thus in good earnest to be snatch'd from them! 'Tis this anguish of expiring Souls, the Church, in true compassion, desires to prevent; and for this end now calls on all her Children, effectually to undertake that work, which they will at that time most certainly wish to have done. She bids them now prepare their house, put all in order, that so, when the hour comes, they may with joy submit, and be wholly free from racking fears, and those tormenting thoughts of being then found unprepar'd.

And thou, my Soul, who reade'st or hearest this, how far are thou concern'd in this affair? How dost thou resolve

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upon

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upon the practice? Believe me, thy turn will come, when Death shall seize thee; and dying well is not the easiest task. If thou putt'st it to the venture, and should'st then miscarry, canst thou step back and try it over again? If this can't be, is it not a madness to run the hazard of Eternity, and let thy present neglect cast thee into everlasting misery, which now is in thy own power to prevent? Rather choose to prepare, and learn before hand what it is to die.

'Tis now thou art call'd to practice something of it: Thou art now to Fast: Fast then from those things the Church forbids, and force thy self for a time at least, to die to them. Separate thy self likewise from all such Objects, as have either sin or danger in them; and if this be uneasy to thee, think it no great unhappiness, since this is the most assured means of escaping Everlasting Woe: And if this seems now a task of difficulty, will it not be then a greater, when thou shalt be forc'd by Death to abandon all, and have no other prospect before thee, but of that never ending misery, which is to be the just punishment of all thy past neglects? Consider this now, and put it not off to thy own sad experience, to make thee understand it better: Choose rather now to put thy House in order, and from this day begin to die. *Friday*

Friday

Before the First Sunday in Lent.

LESSON.

Isaiah, C. 58. V. 1. ends V. 9.

T*His is the Fast I have chosen.* We are just entring upon *Lent*, wherein we are oblig'd to fast; and though it may be no great difficulty so to discharge this Duty, by an outward observance of every part of it, as to be esteem'd Obedient Sons of the Church; yet 'tis not so easie to keep it a Fast acceptable to God, and make it such as he has chosen. The *Jews* Fasted, and were wanting in no sort of exterior Mortification, either of Sack-cloth and Ashes, or any thing else that could possibly afflict; and expecting God's Mercy and Favour as the effect of their Fasting, behold they are wholly disappointed; for God neither hears their Prayers, nor has any regard to their Rigours; so that as People surpris'd, they cry out: *Why have we Fast-ed, and thou seest it not? We have punish'd our selves, and thou regard'st it not.* Thus they found no fruits of all they did. And
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by the Mouth of his Prophet, God gives the reason. *Behold (says he) in the day of your fasting, you are found doing your own wills,* and so goes on charging them with their *Debates, Contentions, Oppressions, Quarrelling, &c.* which they took no care to amend, but whilst they Fasted outwardly, they still went on in their own perverse ways, without due endeavours to reform them.

And was this the Fast God had chosen? No: Such Fasting as this, is the Fast of Hypocrites; he protests against it, and declares, they are to expect no fruit of their Labours, as long as they go on in this method. And is all their Fasting then now vain and fruitless too, who in time of *Lent*, or other Fasts, are careless in correcting those Errors and Failings, to which they are subject? Do all those Fast in vain, who being of a Passionate, Quarrelsome or Revengeful Temper, give liberty to their Inclinations, and while they regulate their Diet, take no pains to moderate their Passions? Yes, God himself has said it, That as long as Christians go on *doing their own wills*, walking on in their own ways, in the ways of their corrupt Nature, indulging their dangerous and vicious Humours, and are more concern'd to please themselves, than to govern their Inclinations,

nations, in order to please him and obey his Commands ; That the Fasts of these are to no purpose, are an empty Ceremony, regarded it may be by Men, but of no power with Heaven, either to move Compassion, or obtain Mercy.

For what can the Fasts of those be, who on these Days of Penance, have the cry of their own Extravagancies ascending up to Heaven against them, whose Swearing, Cursing, Prophanations are heard aloud ; who by their Anger, Revenge, Oppressions disturb themselves and their Neighbours ; who by their expensive Entertainments and Diversions, Drinking, Gaming, &c. rob their Families and the Poor, and strengthen those very Inclinations, which Fasting is design'd to weaken and overthrow ? Can this be a Christian Fast ? Can this prevail on Heaven ? Is this the Fast God has chosen ?

O God ! How miserably do Men deceive themselves, who go on in this way, who observe a sort of outward form, but know nothing of the true Spirit of the Church, and at the end of their Fasting, are as far from all amendment, from all Repentance, from all Mercy and Pardon, as they were before ! They may call themselves Christians, but indeed are Pharisees, and ought to be avoided

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voided as Faithless and Disobedient Children both to God and the Church, and by their ill example contributing to the ruine of many, by leading them out of the way.

For the way of God is very different, the Fast he has chosen is to be accompanied with renouncing of our own Wills, and a Faithful Obedience to his, with true Repentance, sincere endeavours of amendment, with Works of Mercy and Charity. On the Day of thy Fast, *Break* (says he) *all the Bonds of Iniquity, cast off all those burthens of sin, which keep thee down: Give thy bread to the hungry, and cloath the naked.* Is there then any sort of Passion or Irregular Affection, by which thou art dragg'd along, as it were in Chains? Is there any weight of sin, that lies heavy on thee? On the Days of thy Fast, these Chains are to be broken, this Weight is to be remov'd: Add to these endeavours a charitable relief of the poor and distress'd, and then thy Fast will be acceptable, 'twill be the Fast, which thy Lord hath chosen.

Saturday

Saturday

Before the First Sunday in Lent.

LESSON.

Isaiah, C. 58. V. 9. to the end of the Chapter.

If thou shalt honour thy Lord, not doing thy own ways, nor seeking thy own will, nor speaking vain words, then shalt thou delight in the Lord. Fasting is an excellent Practice if done well, but because it is very inconsiderable, as St. Gregory says, of it self, except it be accompanied with other Virtues, therefore it is in this Lesson, are laid before us those Holy Exercises, proper to recommend all our Mortifications to Almighty God, and render them beneficial to our own Souls. Hear then what Conditions our Lord requires of us, as often as we consecrate a Fast to him.

First, To remove all oppression or severity towards our Neighbour.

Secondly, To decline every thing, that may be injurious to him.

Thirdly, To abstain from all sort of sinful Discourse.

Fourthly,

Fourthly, To be careful in keeping the Sabbath.

Fifthly, To renounce our own Wills and evil Inclinations.

Sixthly, To relieve the Poor and Afflicted.

On these terms, he has promis'd, he will have regard to our Fasts, and that they shall be attended with large effects of his Bounty, and unspeakable Blessings.

We are now just stepping into *Lent*, and whoever desires to make it a beneficial Fast, here sees what are the Conditions. 'Tis in vain to think of being exact as to the Rules of Abstinence, or of other Austerities, except at the same time we keep a strict Watch over our selves, so as to govern our Passions, our Will, our Tongue, &c. except we as strictly observe the Rules of *Charity*, of *Patience*, of *Humility* and *Justice*, as of Abstinence or Fasting. For can it be imagin'd, that God will have regard to the keeping our Mouths in order, as to our Eating, if we observe not a like order in our Speaking? Can it be thought he will be moved by any rule we follow, as to what we put into the Stomach; if we keep no rule, as to what comes out from thence and from the Heart? 'Tis he himself has said, the things that defile a Man, are those

those which come from the Mouth and the Heart, and they are these that render him an Enemy to God. What will then avail all the possible strictness as to Fasting, if the Heart be not govern'd, if the Passions and Affections are still in disorder ?

Believe me, the Spirit of God and his Church leads quite another way: For wherever that takes possession of a heart, it brings the *whole Man* into subjection; not permitting Irregularities in one part, while with a strict Discipline it keeps order in the other; but with an equal care overlooks its whole charge, and with an even hand labours to suppress all manner of Extravagancies, wherever they first appear. Therefore St. Paul says, That such as walk by the Spirit, will not fulfil the Lusts of the Flesh, that is, *of no kind*; because whatever they be, 'tis certain they are still contrary to the Spirit of God, and therefore it can shew them no favour, but must make War against them; inasmuch as this Holy Spirit ever labours to crucify the Flesh with *all* its Affections and Lusts.

Whence it appears most evident, that such as are subject to any considerable disorder, of what kind soever, and live at peace within themselves, without daily,

ly, and almost continual Repugnancies, Conflicts and Attempts to master it, that such, I say, live not by the true Spirit, which cannot allow of Peace with any Enemy of God and their Souls.

If therefore we intend to observe this *Lent*, with this Spirit of God, is it not plain, in what manner we are to undertake it? 'Tis not to consider only, how and what we are to eat; but, with a diligent eye, take a full review of all the Inclinations and Habits of our Souls, and resolve to spare or shew favour to none, that has its rise from Self-Love, or the Lusts of the Flesh. The Spirit of true Penance is not consistent with any sort of Vice, and they that admit a Truce with any, have not that Spirit in them. It being then by this Spirit we are to live this holy time, if we live by this Spirit, let us walk by this Spirit, and this will engage us against all manner of evil; and while, by its direction, we fast in punishment of our Offences, it will likewise oblige us to a universal reform.

Grant, O my God, that by this Spirit I may now begin to walk; for I confess, I am distracted with variety of evils: I see my self many ways going astray, and many more, tho' to me unknown, are still seen by thee. And is it to go on thus for ever! Put a stop at length, my Soul,

First Sunday in Lent. 43

Soul, and turn from thy evil ways; 'tis now the Father of Mercies calls upon thee, and offers thee a season wherein thou may'st obtain his Grace: Do not then thy own will, seek not thy own ways, speak not vain words, but faithfully labour to destroy whatever is sin; then shalt thou delight in thy Lord, and he shall be an everlasting Blessing to thee.

First Sunday in Lent.

L E S S O N.

2 Cor. C. 6. V. 1. ends V. 10.

BEhold 'tis now an acceptable time, behold now is the day of Salvation. All our life is an acceptable time, and since the Redemption of Man, every Day is a Day of Salvation. But the Church desires we should understand this more particularly of *Lent*, wherein she calls all her Children by General Fasting and Penitence to return to God; that as much as we have gone out of the way by our Irregularities and Offences, we may now recover again by the method of a Penitential Life. Every sinner, by his Offences, runs away from God, and as long
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as he continues in that state, lives in darkness and at a distance from his Eternal good. And, O God, how dismal a condition is this, whereby Man created for Everlasting Happiness, is so insensible of his own true interest, as to live an Enemy to his Lord and Redeemer, be pleas'd with that, which delights for a moment and will torment for ever, and thus choose to be out of the way of Salvation!

'Tis this unhappy state the Church, with true compassion, bewails in Sinners; and cries out to them, that if ever they think of mercy and pardon, tis now is the acceptable time, now is the time of Salvation; inasmuch as the whole Church now joyning in Prayer, Fasting and Humiliation, and thus endeavouring in some manner to take part in the Sufferings of Christ, there's no question, but Almighty God now opens the Treasures of his Grace, and more plentifully pouring forth his Blessings, is most ready to stretch forth his hand of mercy to as many, as joyn with the Church in their Repentance, and sincerely call upon him, *Lord, save us, or else we perish.*

But how great then must their Repentance be? How sincere and entire their Conversion! This is not to be effected

feſted without true pains, without conſtant endeavors, without a faithful care of diſcharging a good Conſcience in every occaſion, by labouring to deſtroy the body of ſin with painful Mortifications, and praſtiſing whatever Virtues our Duty and Circumſtances ſhall require.

'Tis now an acceptable time, ſays the Apoſtle; and in what manner are we to obſerve it?

Fiſt, We are to give no offence to any, that our Profeſſion may lie under no ſcandal.

Secondly, We are to be patient in all manner of Evils, whether Afflictions, Neceſſities, Stripes or Priſons, Mild and Humble in all Provocations.

Thirdly, Be Chaſt, Pure and clean of Heart.

Fourthly, Have Charity.

Fiſthly, Be content under Infamy and Reproach.

Sixthly, Be accounted as Deceivers, and yet be true; rejoyce under Troubles, &c.

And by what means are we to obtain theſe Virtues? By Labors, ſays the Apoſtle, and taking pains, by Watching, by Faſting, by the knowledge of our Duty, by meditating on the Word of God, by the aſſiſtance of Heaven, by fighting courageouſly with the Arms of Juſtice,

46 *First Sunday in Lent.*

Justice, and not yielding under any opposition.

See here what our Lives ought to be, and what's the method of advancing our selves to this degree of Virtue in a Spiritual Life: 'Tis now the Church calls to the practice of it; there being no question, but as many as observe this Christian Lent, seriously labouring at this time, by Fasting, Watching, Reading, Praying, and resolutely making opposition against all Assaults, will gain so much on themselves, as to escape the usual Snares, and prevail on Almighty God to remember no more their past Iniquities, but according to his Promise, shew mercy to them.

And this method will all those pursue, who being vigilant, have their eyes open to their own Spiritual Advantage, as being sensible, there's no greater assurance of being Predestinated, than carefully to lay hold of the means and occasions God offers them for their Salvation in the pardon of their sins: As on the contrary, there can be no greater argument of Spiritual Sloth, than to let them pass by, without making any advantage of them. Ought we not then attentively to give ear to the advice of St. Paul? *I exhort you, says he, not to receive the Grace of God in vain.* This Time is a
Grace,

First Sunday in Lent. 47

Grace, which God offers us, for the cancelling the Hand-writing that is against us, for the satisfying for our past Offences, and laying the foundation of a new Life: If we let it go unprofitably, is it not neglecting the Favours of Heaven, and evacuating its Grace? What a reproach must this be to a thinking Soul? And what terrible Judgments may be apprehended to follow it, whilst God is thus condemn'd, and his Mercies slighted? This is **Obstinacy** and hardness of heart; and who knows, but the losing this opportunity may be the loss of all? Deliver us, O God, from this perverseness and hardness of heart, and as thou now lay'st before us the means of Salvation, so grant us thy effectual Grace, that we may seasonably make use of them for the conquering of sin and everlasting good of our Souls. O may we never receive thy Grace in vain.

Munday

Munday,

First Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Ezek. C.34. V. 11. ends V. 16.

I *will feed my Sheep, says our Lord, I will seek that which was lost, &c.* Almighty God here promises to take care of his People; and though this was spoke to the *Jews*, yet this same Promise was more abundantly confirm'd to the *Gentiles*; and 'tis in his Goodness and Fatherly care, all Christians are to depend for the remedy of their evils. Having therefore here promis'd, that he will seek that which was lost, bring back what was gone astray, heal what was wounded, strengthen what was weak, &c. ought not this to raise up the Spirits of all, so that the Sinner despair not, nor the Weak be dejected, nor the Wounded loose hopes of recovery? But how are they to expect the effects of this Goodness? If God seeks what was lost, and by secret touches of his Providence, makes them sensible of their Errors; Are they to lie still, shutting their Eyes against his Light, and wait

Munday First Week in Lent. 49

wait, till there are no agreeable Errors to delude them? If he binds up the wounds of those that are hurt, are they to put no restraint on themselves, but take the liberty of every thing that is pleasing, and thus daily open or rather widen their sores anew? And if he applies means to strengthen such as are weak; is it for them to stand expos'd to such things as are most certainly prejudicial to them? Believe me, this is not the way to experience the effects of this Mercy: For as the Rain and Seed falling on Rocks and Highways, is no remedy at all of their barrenness; and only there brings forth fruit, where it finds an earth manur'd and prepar'd to receive it: So 'tis most certain, though the Blessings of Heaven may pour themselves forth in plentiful shores; yet where they fall on those, who like Rocks and Highways, are hard and dry, so as wilfully, or through neglect, to cast off all that falls on them, they will be barren still, and receive no benefit from all these Blessings of a Fatherly Hand.

This is the case of Christians: If Almighty God calls them, and they will not hear: If he shews them their wickedness, and they will not see; if he directs them how to amend, and they will observe no Rules: If he tells them, what

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will

50 *Munday First Week in Lent.*

will hurt and ruine them, and they will not avoid it; what effects can they expect from these Favours of Heaven? They may talk indeed of this Goodness of God, and, in form of words, pretend with joy to praise his Mercy; but this Goodness and Mercy is what will avail them nothing, but only to exaggerate their crimes, since their Perverseness and Ingratitude ever grows more black and intolerable, in proportion to those Heavenly Blessings, which they abuse or neglect: And, it may be, nothing will one day be a greater reproach, or more torment them to the quick, than the remembrance of those many Graces, which they have thus ungratefully rejected.

Is it not then the great concern of as many as desire to benefit themselves by the Blessings of God, then to take the greatest pains in being regular in every Duty, when they perceive Almighty God visits them with greatest bounty; that so his Mercy finding their Souls prepar'd, may soon appear in the fruits of a plentiful Harvest? And is not this the business of all at this time? For 'tis now a time of Mercy, when God promises to visit his People, and manifest his Goodness to the Scatter'd, to the Lost, to the Wounded, to the Weak, to the Strong.

And

Munday First Week in Lent. 51

And ought not all these, as many as are any ways concern'd, seriously recollect themselves, and make the best preparation they are able, that this Heavenly Goodness may not be lost on them? Ought not all truly to humble themselves in Fasting? Ought not all to have recourse to Prayer, diligent Reading and Thinking? How ought the lost and stray, with all possible freedom, renounce their own ways, and make an entire surrender of themselves to those ways, where God's Spirit and Truth shall lead them? Ought not they resolutely to withstand those Passions, which carry them beyond all the bounds of Reason and Duty? Ought not every one make War upon their own ill Habits, and diligently decline whatever they discover to be the occasion of their sin? Ought it not to be our common business to move Heaven by our Sighs and Tears, and by a sincere Repentance dispose our Souls for a General Pardon; and where we find difficulties, there to use violence, and force Corrupt Nature, by discreet Mortifications, to a just compliance?

If we heartily espous'd this cause, and thus kept a *Lent* in earnest, we might with a well grounded confidence expect a share in the Promis'd Blessings; then

52 *Munday First Week in Lent.*

might we, however lost before, hope to be found again by our Heavenly Pastor. Grant therefore, Lord, that while thou seekest us, we may earnestly seek to be found by thee: That while thy Mercy offers to heal our wounds, and comfort whatever is weak, we may faithfully on our parts observe thy directions, and by no disorder disappoint the designs of thy Goodness.

Tuesday

• *The First Week in Lent.*

LESSON.

Isaiah C. 55. V.6. ends V.11.

SEEK our Lord, while he may be found, Call upon him while he is near. This is the advice of the Church in this holy Time, desiring all now to seek our Lord and call on him, because now he may be found. But how are we to seek him? Hear the next words of this Lesson: *Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and return to his Lord, and he will have mercy on him.* There's no seeking God, so as to find him, without forsaking sin; and whoever

Tuesday the first Week in Lent. 52

ver seeks him otherwise, will never find him. This is the constant Lesson, so often repeated to us in *Lent*, that we may not deceive our selves, in thinking, that we seek God by our Fasting, if we quit not at the same time all those ways of ours, which we know are evil and displeasing to him. For as those, who move one foot forward, and the other backward, can never possibly advance, but keep still at the same distance, as if they had never thus attempted to move at all: So 'tis most evident, that as many as think of approaching to God by Fasting, and at the same time go back from him, by continuing in their former and usual sins, very much impose on themselves, if by this method they think of ever coming nearer to him. This is not seeking to find him, but palliating wickedness with the cover of Religion; 'tis joyning in a form of holiness, and going on where the Devil leads them; and how will they ever come by this way to find Christ? They'll find him at last indeed, in the severity of his Judgments, but what part can they then hope to have in the Mercies here promis'd, of which their own Consciences will declare them unworthy, for their having so often contempt'd them, when they were offer'd, and

54 *Tuesday the first Week in Lent.*

refus'd to call upon God when he was near?

If sinners were but truly sensible of the miseries of their condition, and how great a Blessing is the present Offer of Mercy, they would certainly receive the encouragement of this Days Lesson with joy, and make use of this time, not in a Ceremonial Fasting, but by entering on a new method, in the change of their Lives. If we could but imagine, that God had for once dispens'd with the irreversible Sentence of the Damn'd, and releasing them from that state, should grant them six Weeks time on Earth again, wherein they might Repent and do Penance for their former offences, with this Days Promise, *That if the wicked would forsake their evil ways, and the unjust their thoughts, and return to their Lord, he would have mercy on them*: In what manner can we think, in this case, these joyful Souls would employ this time? What earnestness would there be in seeking God, while he might be found, what fervour in calling on him while he was near! What Cries of returning Sinners, what Sighs of Repentance; what diligence in avoiding all occasions, what rigours in Fasting and Mortification, how careful not to loose time,

Tuesday the first Week in Lent. 55

time, &c! And ought not this be the very method of Christians now, especially those, whose sins lie so heavy on them, that in some manner they may be said to be already judg'd? How ought they, upon the Summons of Mercy at this time publish'd, have recourse to Prayer, and by laborious endeavours, strive to change all the affections of their Souls? With what frequent Sighs and Tears should they solicit Heaven, omitting no sort of Self-denials or Mortifications proper for the mastering their disorder'd Passions, and never give over this work, till they have reason to hope their hearts are chang'd, and now prepar'd for the offer'd mercy: *I will pursue my Enemies*, says David, *and never rest till they are quite defeated.* This ought to be the task of *Lent* to every Christian, so diligently to pursue the Enemies of their Souls, as to admit no peace, till they are overcome; and by no means to let this time pass over in fruitless Forms and Ceremonies, and thus ungratefully abuse that Goodness, which now calls them to Repentance; it being no less a Mercy to grant them now this Time and Means, whereby they may be preserv'd from Hell, than if once condemn'd, to rescue them from that mis-

56 *Tuesday the first Week in Lent.*

ry, and indulge them new time to reverse their fate.

Let us then look on these six Weeks, as an Indulgence of the Divine Mercy, granted us for the making atonement for all our past offences; and preparing our Souls to appear before him; and who knows, whether the whole six Weeks will come to our share or no? Let us seriously carry on this Penitential Work, be neither wanting in Prayers nor Tears, nor any ways favour our sins, by sparing our selves; for all such Favours will at the end prove Cruelties. 'Tis our sins have plac'd us at a distance from God; 'tis only our Repentance can again bring us near him.

Wednesday

Wednesday

Ember-Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Exod. C. 24. V. 12. to the end.

AND *Moses was in the Mount forty days and forty nights.* God had commanded him to go up into the Mount, there to receive from his hand the Tables of Stone, the Law and the Commandments; there the Majesty of God appear'd as a Consuming Fire, and *Moses* abode in his Presence forty Days and forty Nights. Happy *Moses*, who fasted forty Days and forty Nights in the presence of God: Happy we, who have begun our forty Days Fast, could we abide this time, and finish them all in the presence of God; could we live this time so exactly regulated by the Spirit of Piety, as if, like this Prophet, we were daily receiving the Commandment and the Charge of keeping them, from God's own Hand. The fast of this Prophet was certainly the Figure and true Model of the Christian Fast; and therefore, however exact or even rigo-

58 *Wednesday Ember-Week in Lent.*

rous we may be, as to our Abstinence, we shall make but a very imperfect work of it, if we have not the Commandments and Law of God in our hands, that is, in our Works and just discharge of our Duty.

How grateful a Fast therefore would those observe, who making a Holy Mount of their House, would endeavour now to ascend into it; leaving, like *Moses*, the Multitude below, by disengaging themselves, as much as possible, from all that business and diversion, which takes up the Multitude, and is only fit to dissipate the Mind! For though the necessary care of a Family, and just diligence in faithfully performing every thing belonging to our Charge, is a Duty becoming all times; yet, when the Church calls, as now, to Recollection and Penance, 'tis then fit to make the best retreat we can, from such things as give disquiet to our thoughts and alienate our minds from God. And how many are there of this kind, whether in regard to Business, Visits, Company, Diversions, &c. which, without prejudice, will bear the being adjourn'd a while? For though, in favour to our selves, we may look on many things as necessary: Yet considering them more impartially, we shall discover the greatest

Wednesday Ember-Week in Lent. 59

est part might be spar'd, were it not for flattery and Self Love, which corrupts our judgment : It being not so much real Business, which disturbs the greatest part of the World, and indisposes them for better thoughts, as their Extravagancies, Irregularities, Curiosities and immoderate complying with Company, or their own Corrupt Appetites.

All these unnecessary Engagements then being carefully laid aside, it may be in the power of every one to retire, in *Lent*, into a kind of Solitude, there to converse more familiarly with God in Prayer and treating of their only great concern of their Souls, which ought to be their daily and principal Employment in this holy time. And besides this, no diligence ought to be omitted, for their receiving the Commandments from the Hand of God. The greatest part of Christians know their Commandments, but they know better to say them, than to keep them ; and what is this, but to learn them from their Books, but not from God ; for what he teaches, is to keep them ? This then ought to be a considerable part of their business, to learn their Commandments of God ; that is, so constantly to beg his assistance, as to obtain his Grace, for the exact observance of them : To apply

60 *Wednesday Ember-Week in Lent.*

ply themselves so carefully to the reading good Books, that having first discover'd their own Failings, they may in them find Remedies proper for their Cure, and be encourag'd to keep such a Watch on themselves, that from their strict and constant Guard, they may be truly said to be Keepers of the Commandments.

'Tis a common snare, wherein too many are held, to go on in dangerous ways, to have Souls wholly Worldly and Carnal, and know nothing of the Gospel Spirit, or of Christ; and yet be so blind, as to see nothing of their State, nor doubt of their being in a wrong way. And the reason is, because seldom conversing with good Books, they are not sensible of the Nature of sin, have very gross and only general Conceptions of it, but are not at all acquainted with those infinite Delusions, by which the Devil and Self-love, under fair and innocent covers, carries on Souls to Precipices, and by degrees to the depth of Vice. Is it not thus we see many, though free from the grosser crimes, and therefore Innocent in their own Opinion, yet without scruple offending against Charity, against Justice, against Temperance, &c. so as to make others justly wonder and even be scandaliz'd at their Pro-

Wednesday Ember-Week in Lent 61

Proceedings, and repute them very unsafe in their state, whilst they enjoy a certain peace within themselves, as if all were well? And what's the reason of this Insensibility, but their little care in reading those Books, which are proper to give them light in this affair, and make them more knowing in the concern of Conscience and the Spirit? Upon which score, though many may hope, their sins of Ignorance will not be charg'd against them, they'll find them at the end very heavy: and what they call *Ignorance*, will be condemn'd as a *Gross neglect of their Souls, and a very Criminal Omission*. Another way therefore is now to be taken in *Lent*, and these ill consequences of a stupid negligence to be prevented by diligent Reading and Prayer, that thus using due means for their instruction, their Oversights may find excuse, and they hope to receive the Commandments from God, and plentiful Grace, whereby to keep them: This will be truly ascending into the Mount and conversing with God, the best Exercise of *Lent*.

Thursday

Thursday.

First Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Ezek, C. 18. V. 1. ends V. 9.

IF a man be Just, and do that which is Lawful and right, he shall Live. Here's a Promise of eternal life to him, that is Just. The terms of Happiness are here included in a little room; He that is Just, shall be happy; but this short expression comprehends many great Duties. 'Tis not only being Just to our Neighbour in giving him his own, or not wronging him, as to his Goods; but to be Just to him as to his Reputation, to be Just, in giving him Good example, and doing nothing that may be prejudicial either to Soul or body; 'tis to be Just more particularly to those under our charge, as a Master to his Family and Servants; Parents to their Children, that nothing be wanting to them, thro' their fault, either of Spiritual or Temporal; as likewise that Servants and all others faithfully discharge whatever belongs to their obligation, so that none suffer thro' their Sloth

Thursday first Week in Lent. 63

Sloth or neglect, Besides this Justice to our Neighbour, there's a Necessity of being just to God, that is, Giving to God the things that are God's; in Loving him above all things, and preferring no Creature or Created Good before him, which is giving him our Heart and Affections: In Believing those Truths, which he teaches, and opposing nothing that comes from him; and this is giving him our Understanding and Judgment: In referring all we undertake, speak or do, to his Honour and Glory; and this is giving him our life and actions; and what is this, but giving all to him, to whom all belongs? Again, there's another Justice, we owe our selves; and this is, To omit nothing necessary for the support of body or Soul, but carefully to provide for their well-being; this is a charge Almighty God has laid on all; and to neglect it, is an evident breach of Justice: How many obligations here follow upon this, as to the taking all the pains necessary for the Knowledge of our Duties, as likewise in using all the Means ordain'd by God for the enabling us to do those Duties: then for the diligent enquiry into all our Failings, and omitting no care whether in Praying, Reading, Fasting, Alms, or other application, that may be proper and most effectual for their Cure? Many other

64 *Thursday first Week in Lent.*

ther great Obligations fall upon us from this head, which the Just man faithfully performs. And whoever now complies with these threefold Duties of Justice, both to God, their Neighbour and themselves, that man is truly Just; and there's no question, but thus, *If a man be Just, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live.*

But then let those many here consider, how much they deceive themselves, who seem Secure of happiness on the false grounds of a mistaken or at least imperfect Justice. *We do wrong to none, say they, We give to every one their own;* and upon this assurance, presently flatter themselves with the Character of *just*: whereas this is but one part of Justice; and such as comply with this, may yet many others ways, offend against this Virtue, and be guilty of great injustices against God, their Neighbour and themselves; and tho' they are neither Thieves Oppressors or Cheats, be still deservedly excluded heaven. What if they rob not on the high-way, do violence to none, but punctually pay to every one their due, may not they still be Thieves in Shops and Trade, and be very unjust to those they deal with? May not they be Unjust to their Family, to Wife, to Children, and the Poor; in viciously or vainly

Thursday first Week in Lent. 65

ly spending what's for their support? may not they be unjust to God, in alienating from him their Understanding, Affections, Heart and Will, and giving to Creatures what's his Right? May not they be unjust to themselves, in many great Offences, by which they murder their own Souls? There's more in being Just, than these imagine, and when they think they are so, is it not to be fear'd, 'tis for want of examining themselves, and knowing what truly Justice is: and if upon these false grounds they build their Hopes of Heaven, how far will that be from them, when they think they are near it? And this will be a late discovery, if they take no care in health to find it out, but stay till death opens their eyes and sad experience puts it beyond all doubt.

Another deceit there is in those, who touch'd with the desire of being Just, resolve to change their lives, and proceed so far as even to censure and correct whatever they find most Criminal in themselves: thus upon the heat their most Scandalous and Grosser Sins they carefully avoid, but as for their heart, that remains still the same, their Passions are unmortified, they are fond of the World and its Vanities, and know not how to renounce themselves, to take up the Cross and become

66 *Thursday first Week in Lent*

come a True Disciple of their Lord: they understand not what it is to be born of the Spirit, to be interiorly chang'd, to make War against all Corrupt, Worldly and dangerous Desires, Inclinations and Satisfactions; but forsaking the more notorious Crimes. look on all beyond this to be Pious affectation, or at least the practice of an unnecessary devotion: And being arriv'd thus far, they conclude themselves *Just*; when God knows they are not come half way: and what will this avail them, when notwithstanding their retrenchments, having their hearts wholly deprav'd and Worldly, they live not according to the Maxims of the Gospel and Christ's Spirit, but are led along, tho' not in the depth of Sin, yet in the Corrupt ways of the Flesh and the World? And shall these live with Christ for ever, who are not acquainted here with the life of Christ? Can they hope for the reward of Justice, who never pass'd the Shell and came not half way to it? What then ought we to do at present, but in this time of devotion, examine the state of our Souls, and see what we want of *true Justice*, and never rest, till by Prayer and Fasting we have cast out all manner of Evil Spirits from our hearts; so to make room for the Spirit of Justice? for thus only can we inherit the Promises.

Friday

Friday.

Ember Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Ezek. C. 18. V. 20. ends V. 28.

I*f the wicked man does Penance for all the Sins he has Committed, and keeps my Precepts, and does that which is lawful and Just, he shall surely live and not die.* This whole Lesson is an engagement of God's word to Sinners; that if they forsake and do Penance for their Sins, they shall have forgiveness and their iniquities shall no more be remember'd. with a caution to the Just, that if they turn from their Righteousness, all their good Works shall be forgot, and they certainly die the death of the Wicked. Thus are we here spurr'd on to a holy Life, and encourag'd to Repentance, we are under the guilt of Sin: and in this again appears, by the so frequent proposal of these Truths, what the Church expects should be our employment this Lent, to wit, to be exactly diligent in such exercises, as are proper to establish us in a life of Virtue, and Purifie our Souls from Sin; and 'tis

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'tis with this latter we must first begin.

Our first business then is to apply our selves to such means, as may be most effectual for the remedy of Sin, for 'tis only on this condition, we can render our selves capable of God's Mercy and Favour. Ought not every one then, seriously reflecting on the misery, in which he is; how by his Offences he's become displeasing to God, and remov'd at a distance from him and from all good, forthwith conceive a true abhorrence of his state, and push'd on with a sincere desire of amendment, cry out with the Prodigal Son; *I will arise and go to my Father?* He must first *arise*, that is, quit that state of Misery and Corruption, in which he lies, he must, by violence, separate himself from all the occasions of his sins, and admit no Society with darkness, while he's resolving to go to the Region of Light. God will have him be converted from his evil ways; for if he goes on still in the path of his iniquity, if he repeats his former sins; what claim can he reasonably lay to the Promises of Mercy? Can there be Mercy for such, as will do nothing for it; for such as will part with no satisfaction for God's sake? No, all these, who thus carelessly or affectedly continue in their wonted

Trans-

Friday first Week in Lent. 69

Transgressions, however they may have passing thoughts of approaching to God, most certainly continue at a distance from him, and God grant their punishment one day be not, what they now choose, that is, to be separated from him for ever. He must *arise* then, that thinks effectually of Mercy, and go to his *Father*.

For however a sinner may *arise* from his usual crimes, he must yet remember, he may still have a Journey upon his hands, a great way to go, before he comes to his Father. It is not every one, that breaks off the course of his sins, is presently in union with God. There may be many degrees in a true Conversion; and there's no question, but he that disposes all things, may by a providential mercy, permit many delays in the perfect cure of a Soul. How often is it Almighty God lets Christians continue long time struggling with their Infirmities, and almost in a perpetual conflict with their perverse and stubborn Passions; so that, though they fall not into their accustom'd sins, yet they frequently experience their own weakness, under the violence of their Inclinations, not yet willing to yield? And this, that they may be sensible of the greatness of their evils; that by the difficulty, they may

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may know to value their cure; that they may be more watchful in preventing all relapses, that by their continued Prayer and repeated Endeavours, their Souls may be enlarg'd and become more capable of the Divine Gifts; that hence they may be preserv'd in a perpetual Humility and lasting Thanksgiving: These advantages there may be in these delays, and in the length of the Journey before the sinner comes to God: And though this may be afflicting to a Soul, that truly desires to experience the sweetness of Divine Love; yet he that has too much sought his own satisfaction, and transgress'd the Commandments, to please himself, ought in justice expect some difficulties in his cure, and endeavour by his Patience in this laborious way, to make some satisfaction for the sinful Charms of that long way, wherein he ran from God.

'Tis but reason they should find something of that method Christ us'd in healing the Man sick of the Palsie, *Mat. 9 6.* He bid him take up his Bed and go to his House. While he was sick, he lay on his Bed, and there took his rest; but now he must take it up and carry it. Such as are under a Spiritual Palsie, make their Passions serve them

Friday first Week in Lent. 71

as a kind of Bed, wherein their Souls rest and seek their ease : But when a Soul's Converted, these same Passions become a burthen, and it must with patience go under them, as under a heavy weight ; even as the Paralytic found his Bed now to be no comfort, but a charge or oppression to him. For God is Just, and he will, that those who have tasted the pleasure of their Passions, should now feel their weight, and meet with difficulties in their cure. But a Soul must here go on with courage, and accept this trouble, as a just penance for past offences : 'Tis in this a sinner shews the sincerity of his Conversion, while he lets not the difficulty of his amendment put him out of his way. They know not what virtue is, nor consider the true value of their Souls, who think to go on with this work at ease, and are presently discourag'd upon meeting with difficulties. This is a Victory not to be obtain'd by one Battle, but by repeated Engagements ; and he that expects to be Conquerour, must take as much pains to gain ground, as the Devil does not to loose it ; for he that is soonest tired, will certainly be the loser. These are the Battles proper for this time ; 'tis now every Christian ought to proceed with Courage, with Constancy and Patience ; there

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there are none so lost, but by these means may rescue themselves from the power of the Enemy. Let us then do penance for all the sins we have committed, and cast our selves wholly on the infinite Mercies of God, and we shall surely live and not die.

Saturday

Ember-Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Deuteronom. C. 26. V. 12. to the end.

I Have taken that which was sanctified out of my house and given it to the Levite, to the Stranger, to the Orphan and to the Widow, as thou, O Lord, hast commanded me: I have not transgress'd thy Precepts, nor forgot thy Commands. Almighty God had enjoyn'd the Israelites to give their Tenth to the Levites; and at appointed times to make a division of all they had, and give one part of it to Strangers, Orphans and Widows; all this was esteem'd Sanctify'd; and having discharg'd themselves of this Duty, they were then oblig'd to pray in the manner, as here prescrib'd in this Lesson, and were thus

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thus qualify'd for inheriting the Promises God had made them. And would to God, every Christian would come thus dispos'd to perform the Devotions of this time, having nothing in their possession, which, by title of Justice and Law of God, belongs to others: That with truth they might say, They have nothing in their House, which is the Right of the *Levite*, of the Stranger, of the Orphan or Widow: But that they have faithfully given to every one their own. Such Prayers thus offer'd from hands, not empty, but full of good works, may with confidence expect a plentiful Blessing from Heaven, which is ever liberal of its succours to those, whose hands are directed by Justice, and whose Hearts are ever open to the Necessities of the Poor.

But as for those, who undertake the Obligations of this time in Fasting and Praying, and can make no such protestation, without a breach of truth, by unjustly detaining in their hands, what belongs to others; these can have no such hopes, while the cries of the Fatherless and Widow, who suffer by their injustice, ascend before God, and shew all their Devotion to be lies and Hypocrisie. For what better Character can these claim, who too often make the oppressi-

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on of the Poor, the support of their Extravagancies? They find Money for their Vanities and Excess, for their Drinking and Gaming, and even for their Vices: But when the payment of just Debts is demanded, there's nothing to be had, but cold put-offs, or faithless Promises; so that pretending to want wherewith to satisfy Justice, they ever find, wherewith to feed their vicious humours: To supply these, they try all Friends, diminish their Estates, and often Mortgage so long, till the whole be consum'd; and then only think of being good Husbands, when just Payments are to be made. Now what effect can this sort of half-Christians expect in their Fasting and Praying, who cannot lift up their hands to Heaven, but under the load of Injustice, who by a Gentile sort of Fraud and Rapine, make Families starve, and depriving Parents of what's necessary, with Poverty bring lasting Contentions amongst them, and render them incapable of performing their Duties, which is often attended with dismal Consequences, even to many Generations? Can these think their Prayers will not be drown'd with the Cries of the Oppressed? God has promis'd to hear the Poor, the Orphan and Widow, and if he hears their Cries, will not the

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be fatal to those, by whose injustice they suffer? It were then to be wish'd, all Christians would at this time examine themselves by the Justice of the *Jew*, and not lie still in a false peace, under the weight of these great sins; nor rest till they had taken effectual care for the removing the burthen: Happy they, who can say with truth; *Feci Judicium & Justitiam: I have done Justice and Judgment: Who can say. They have cast out of their House, what belongs to the Levite, to the Orphan and Widow*; this would be a good disposition to the keeping of *Lent*.

Another is, to be assisting to the Poor in their Necessities, by giving Alms: This is so necessary, that the Holy Fathers will not allow *Lent* to be kept, but by halves, where Fasting goes without Alms; this is universally concluded by all, and ought as universally to be observ'd, where 'tis possible, by as many as desire the fruit of their Fasting, in the pardon of their sins. Hence we are to have a double care.

First, To give to the Poor of what we can truly spare; for this, in some manner, is their Right: Because, what is superfluous to the Rich, is necessary for the Poor: And he that keeps such things by him, *S. Augustine* says, keeps what

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what is not his own. This sort of giving, is in reality, giving to Christ, 'tis dividing our Substance with him, 'tis taking him into part of our inheritance, and the most assur'd means of being chosen Coheir with him of Glory.

Secondly, Not to spend any thing in this time of Penance, except on what is necessary, that is, not to cast Money away upon curiosity, upon Diversions, Entertainments, Vanity, much less, Sacrifice it to Sensuality or Vice; but lay all this by, which Nature prompts us thus to misemploy, and let it be the Stock of the Poor: What a full Treasury would here soon be, if all thus to be mispent, were brought in here! And though it may be natural here to reflect on those great ones, who spend their Estates in Vanity and Excess; yet if we look'd nearer home, I believe there's scarce any, but who might easily find one indebted to this Stock; whilst of the many things we all pretend to be *Necessary*, an Impartial Judge, I fear, would condemn the greatest part to *Self-Love*, to *Humour*, *Ill custom* and *Superfluity*. Let us now then resolve on a better management. and never throw away that which if rightly plac'd, would serve to purchase Heaven. *Whilst thou spendest any thing Idly, the Poor lay claim to it, and*
say,

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say, 'tis *theirs* : They cry aloud, 'Tis all *inhumanly* taken from them, whatever is thus *mis-spent*. Thus S. Bernard : But if thou dividest thy Stock with them, thou thus pay'st thy long contracted Debts, thou makest recompence for thy past Excesses, and provision for thy Soul, by laying up a Treasure in Heaven. Let us then pay this double Debt, retaining nothing which is anothers Right, keeping nor spending nothing, of which Providence has made us only Stewards, to distribute to the Neceffitous, but not to feed our own Extravagancies: Thus if we give to the Stranger, to the Fatherless, the Widow and the Poor, what is their portion, this Justice and Charity will render both our Fasting and Prayer acceptable, and most certainly discharge us of those Debts we owe to God, in the entire pardon of all our sins.

Second Sunday in Lent.

LESSON.

1 *Theff.* C. 4. V. 1. ends V. 7.

T*His is the Will of God, that you be Holy* Having now pass'd over a Week of *Lent*, it may not be improper for every Christian, on this Day, to take a short review of themselves, and see, how far they have complied with the obligation of this time, how far they have gain'd on themselves, in their approaches to that Great End, design'd in this Holy Institution. For certainly, *this is the Will of God that you be holy*: so this is the Intention of the Church in all the Injunctions of this time, *that you be holy*. This end it is the Church proposes; having no other reason to require of her Children, to Fast, Pray, Give Alms, and Mortifie themselves in all manner of Self-denials, than as far as these are Means most effectual for obtaining God's Mercy, and that true Holiness of Life, which is the necessary accomplishment of every good Christian.

Let

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Let every one then here call the Week over, and enquire first with what exactness, according to the best of their Abilities, they have observ'd the means enjoin'd of Fasting, Mortification, &c. and then take one step farther and see, how much they have benefited by the use of these means, in *being Holy*, as is the Will of God and his Church : For if, upon examination, they find, their principal concern has been, to be only regular in Fasting, and not to be more Holy than ordinary, what is the advantage of *Lent* ? If they go on still, in all their wonted Excesses of their Tongue, of their Appetite, Corrupt Affections and Sense ; are just as Worldly, Carnal and Extravagant, as before ; how do these comply with the Will of God, which is, that they *be Holy* ? Have not these reason to correct this Error, in the Humility of a sincere Repentance ; and, tho' late, yet now truly resolve on a new method, so as not to lose the benefit of the time to come ? It ought to be their present business to look into their defects ; and consider, what in particular, is absolutely necessary, on their parts, for their amendment. It ought to be their great care this day, to study, what it is to be Holy ; and what is requir'd of them for fulfilling this Will of God.

And upon a short reflection it will appear, that, *to be Holy*, is to comply with that First and Greatest Command, which is, *To love God above all things*: And what is this, but to give to God the first place in our Hearts; to let him have the rule of our Thoughts, our Words and all our Actions? So that as Worldly Men are led along by the violence of their deprav'd Appetites, the Will of God may powerfully over-rule in us all these Inclinations, and we labour not to fulfil our own Desires, but truly to satisfy that Obligation, which our Heavenly Father lays on us.

Now to possess our selves of this Divine Love, which is, the root of all Holiness, 'tis not enough to conceive certain Ideas or Thoughts of it: For, its Seat not being in the Understanding, we may come to Apprehend, Discourse and Treat of this Love of God, and yet be totally void of it: As many great Men, alas, there are, who reason and discourse most profoundly of God and Divine things, and yet are but little or nothing inflam'd with them. Nay, to go farther, and profess with Tongue and Mind, that we love God, and prefer him to all Creatures, is not yet True Love, but only Signs of it: And would to God, there were not too many Christians,

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fians, who repeating over their Prayers, thus, in words, attest their Love to him. and yet at the same time, have their Hearts possess'd with many Passions of Sensuality and Corruption, and not at all mov'd, but in appearance, by that Love, which they pretend to: Which is not an act of the Understanding, but a certain Impulse and Inclination of the Will towards its principal Object, which is God.

'Tis here then we are chiefly to examine our selves, not only, whether we speak or think frequently of God, but besides this, whether we have an inclination or bent in our hearts, whereby, as with a secret and sweet violence, we are ready to serve, obey, and please him in all we can, whether we make his interest our own, rejoyce in what's joyful to him, grieve at all that displeases him, and fear nothing more, than what may endanger our separation from him. In such a disposition of the Heart, and not in words, or barren thoughts, consists this Love, the ground of our Perfection. And if, upon enquiry, we can discover such a power within us, which makes us fight resolutely against Temptations, decline whatever we apprehend to be the Occasion of sin, which makes us prefer our Duty before pleasing our selves or

82 *Second Sunday in Lent.*

Company, apply our selves diligently to such means, as are proper to weaken our ill Habits, and improve in Spiritual strength, which makes us disesteem the World and all Humane respects, rejoyce in the expectation of Bliss, and be in a disposition of leaving Father, Mother, Friends, Estate and Good Name, rather than depart from the Law of God. If we can discover, I say, such a Power moving within us, we have then reason to hope, that God has kindled in our Hearts some sparks of that Divine fire, he came to bring on Earth: But if we find no such signs, we are then bound to use all endeavours for the changing of our hearts, and never be tired, till we see some good fruits begin to appear; for till the sense of our Duty and the Love of God gets the Victory over, and commands all that is worldly and sensual within us, we deceive our selves, if we think we are Holy, as is the Will of God, we should be.

Munday

Munday.

Second Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Dan. C. 9. V. 15: ends V. 19.

WE have sinn'd, we have transgressed all thy Commandments: but let thy anger, I beseech thee, O Lord, be turned away from us. The whole Lesson is a Prayer of *Daniel*, which he offers to Almighty God, having prepared himself by Fasting, and being now cover'd with Sackcloth and Ashes; and 'tis in behalf of the *Jews*, who had been in Captivity near seventy years. What a confusion is this to Christians, who come to Prayers; but with a Spirit, how unlike to *Daniel*! He pours forth his Soul before God, confessing his own Sins and those of his People; not in a form of Words run over with an insensible and distracted Mind; but in the true Spirit of Penance, rigorously punishing those Sins, which he confesses; and having his Soul no less humble in the acknowledgment of his own unworthiness, than he is abject and contemptible

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ptible in the manner of his address. VVe confess our Sins too, but is it with the Spirit of this holy Man? Is it with that true Sense of an offended God; with that profound Humility; with that sincere Repentance? If we examine our frequent and easy relapses; and reflect on the little care generally taken for not returning to the vomit; we might have but too much reason to fear, the Confession of the greatest Number of Christians is little better than a Form, wherein they accuse themselves, and say *They are sorry*; but God knows, how far they are from being really so. 'Tis easy repeating such words, and not much more difficult to conceive an Idea of true Sorrow in their Understanding; but sincerely to detest their Sins, and have their Hearts so truly chang'd, that what was before their *Choice*, is now become the real Object of their Hate, and what they firmly purpose for ever to avoid; this is a Greater work, a work of Grace; and I fear not so easily obtained, as most presume, who think to have it, but seldom think to ask for't as they ought. They call to mind their Sins, and forthwith run to discharge their burthen; as if *Examining* and *Confessing*, were the effectual remedy of all their evils; when God knows, the
Princi-

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Principal and Healing Part is yet behind, but little thought on, if not neglected. If *Daniel* had thus, in haste, presented a catalogue of his own and Peoples sins; could he, for this Ceremonial Form have justly expected a grant of that Mercy he came to ask? No, he knew him to be a God, that regards the Heart and not the Lips alone: And therefore his first care, was by true Penitential Acts to dispose his Soul, by a profound Humility, a Heartly Sorrow, sincere Repentance, and well-grounded Confidence in his God; and being thus interiorly prepar'd, then he lays open all his sins, then with all the vigour of his Soul, he sues for Mercy, and then he finds it. O that, we came thus truly qualified, as often as we confess and ask for pardon; never to set a value, or think on the declaring of our sins, till thus, like *Daniel*, we had first endeavour'd to work a change within. O! How powerfully do's an Humble and Contrite Heart prevail with God, to lay aside his Wrath, and turn his Anger from us: And how short will they come of Mercy, who carelessly neglect these means!

Again, there's another Circumstance to be observ'd, *Daniel* asks pardon for his People, after they had suffer'd near Se-

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86 *Munday second Week in Lent.*

venty Years Captivity for their sins; and while he asks it, still adds new punishments by Fasts and Sack-cloth. He knew the order of God's Justice in regard of Man, That either he must not sin: Or if he sins, that he must be punish'd. 'Twas by order of this Justice, he knew his People had suffer'd so long a Slavery, and this same Justice he had in view, while he uses these rigours on himself. And is not this to teach us, how readily we ought to submit to those afflictions, which God sends us, as the just scourge of our offences; and likewise by voluntary Mortifications to punish our own Sins; so to give proof of the detestation we have for our crimes, and satisfy; to the best of our power, the Divine Justice, which we have unworthily provok'd? 'Tis true, Christ has fully satisfied for all our sins; but his satisfaction is not applied to us, except we conform to the Law of his Justice, in doing all that he requires at our hands. And even then, whatever we do, has its whole worth from the Merits of his Sufferings; so that, though by our Afflictions, or Rigours, we may obtain a remission of the punishment due to our sins; yet this is not obtain'd, but in virtue of his Passion, and the Merits of Jesus Christ. Every truly repenting sinner then ought to approve
and

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and love this order of God's Justice, and even be willing to be punish'd for his past Offences ; as the Prodigal Son returning home, confess'd he was unworthy to be call'd a Son, and likewise desir'd he might be treated, not as a Son, but as a Hired Servant. He knew he had offend- ed, he knew punishment was due to his Offences, and therefore he espous'd the cause of Justice, while he petitions to be humbled. This is the true disposition of Penance, and what we ought ever to ob- serve, as we desire the effects of it in the Mercy of God.

Grant therefore, O merciful God, that with a chearful heart, we may submit to all those Crosses, which thou sendest, as the Chastisement of our sins, for this is to be patient under thy Justice. Grant we may be Instruments of thy Justice, in punishing in our selves what we know deserves it : And if thus dispos'd, like *Daniel* we ask for mercy, then like him we may hope to find it.

Tuesday

Tuesday

Second Week in Lent.

LESSON.

3 Kings C. 17. V. 8. ends V. 16.

THE word of the Lord came to Elias, saying, Arise, and go to Sarepta in Sidon, and stay there: for I have commanded a Widow to feed thee: The Servants of God are many times in want, that others may have an opportunity of exercising their Charity towards them; They suffer, thus to encrease daily in vertue themselves, by their being humbled; and their Sufferings are a Mercy to others, by trying their Goodness, and moving them to the giving Relief. The Practice of both these Parts, whether in Suffering, or Assisting those that suffer, is very proper in this time; and to whichsoever of them God calls us, I wish we could as chearfully undertake it, as *Elias* and the Widow; since his Appointments are no less an expresse Command to us, in the intimation of his Will, than was his Word, that came to the Prophet. But then let it be our great care

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care to follow the Examples here propos'd. The Prophet, till now had been under God's own care, being fed by Ravens ; now he is sent to be reliev'd by a Widow ; and though he knew her not, yet being order'd by Heaven, he readily obeys. The Widow's subsistence was brought to one handful of Meal ; and yet being demanded relief by the Prophet, she supplies his necessity, and trusts to God's Providence and Promise for her own support. Here are great things done on both sides, and see, how without any sort of Solitude, Fears or Disquiet ; but with all the Readiness, Peace of Mind and Confidence imaginable : 'Tis this manner of doing whatever is requir'd of us, I heartily recommend this Day: There being nothing more injurious to the Just Devotion of this time, than those too great Apprehensions, Solitudes and Disquiets, which ever attend too many Christians (otherwise well enough dispos'd) in what Almighty God has call'd them to suffer or to do ; whilst by these Passions of Weakness, they either wholly loose, or at least considerably diminish the benefit and value of all they do.

The reason is, because however a prudent Care and Diligence in all we do, be just and commendable ; yet Solitude

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is ever unlawful, as proceeding from a want of submission to the Orders of God, and disturbing our minds with an unprofitable trouble 'Tis evident, there's nothing can possibly befall us, but what God wills, and his Will being ever just, 'tis then plain, we can apprehend nothing, but the execution of his Justice; though we offend too, at the same time against his Goodness, in admitting of a certain distrust, and fearing he has not a care of us, or will not provide what is necessary for us: By which we seem to doubt of his Fidelity and Promises, and thus indiscreetly provoke Almighty God, to leave us to all those inconveniencies, which we apprehend, and unhappily deprive our selves of those Succours, which a full confidence in the Divine Goodness might have obtain'd for us. The Rule then we ought to follow in all matters of difficulty, must be, To omit no manner of Diligence, Application and Pains, both by our selves and Friends, as the Circumstances of our Affairs, in Prudence, seem to require; and going on thus with as even and quiet a temper, as possibly we can, to wait then with Patience and a certain Hope, that Almighty God will, in due time, open a way for Relief: For this, I observe, is the method of Providence;

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if we proceed every day doing what our Duty, for that time, seems to exact, though in great darkness and uncertainty, as to what is yet to come : Almighty God seldom fails of ordering something, by which he manifests his Will, and removing all indifferency, plainly shews, which way we are to take, and evidently determines our Lot. And now whilst Divine Providence is thus watchful in all our Affairs, why should we not strive, as the Apostle advises, to lay aside all Solitude, and cast our care ever upon him ; as being most assur'd, that if we discreetly endeavour on our parts, he will not fail in his assistance, but will bring all things to a happy end : This Hope and Confidence ought to carry us on cheerfully in all we undertake ; and not doubt, but God will be our Deliverer.

Though I cannot promise, that even on these conditions, every thing will still succeed to our Wishes ; for 'tis certain, there are numbers of good People, that have had great miscarriages, and suffer extream misery and poverty. But what then ? All this ought not to put us out of our way, or in the least diminish our Hope ; since such evils may be no other than the effect of that Love and Providential care, which God has over us, as being

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being most expedient for our eternal good. 'Tis ever therefore to be remember'd, that though Almighty God be the certain Helper and Deliverer of all that sincerely trust in him; yet 'tis not of all in the same manner: For he delivers some, by diverting the evils, or removing them; others, by giving them Patience necessary to bear them: And this second way, if it be not most desirable, is at least more Glorious to Christians. Now 'tis our Duty to leave the choice of these ways to Heaven; God is to deliver us, as he pleases; who knows, what is best for us; whilst if we choose for our selves, we may easily be misled by inclination, and refuse that, which may be most for our advantage. And in this consists the injustice of all Solicitude and excessive Fears, in pretending to prescribe to God the method of our Deliverance, which, it may be, is less to our purpose, and not so agreeable to the Will of God. Remove from me, O Lord, all Solicitude and interior Disquiet; and grant me a true Submission to thy Will, that in all Difficulties I may ever preserve my Peace, and entirely leave my Deliverance to thy choice. *Amen.*

Wednesday

Wednesday.

Second Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Esther C. 13. V. 8. ends V. 17.

Lord God of Abraham, have mercy on thy People; for our Enemies design to destroy us, and ruine thy Inheritance. Mardocheus thus addrestes himself to Almighty God, in a Prayer, which makes up this days Lesson. He knew his People were design'd for destruction by *Aman*; and therefore makes his application to Heaven for their deliverance. 'Tis now a seasonable time for us to make the like application, in order to obtain Succors of Heaven; for certainly, if we consider our circumstances aright, we have no less reason to apprehend our Souls to be in danger from the powerful malice of our Spiritual Enemy, than the *Jews* were from the designs of *Aman*. This danger appears very great, if we look on the vast numbers of those, who daily fall a Sacrifice to his malice: for nothing can seize us with juster Fears, than the sight of these
dismal

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dismal Effects: How almost infinite alas, are those Souls which are Spiritually dead: and how small the number of those, in whom appear the signs of life! There appear no such signs of life in all those, who are without true Faith, which is the life of the Just man, as the *Apostle* says, and without which 'tis impossible to please God. There are no such signs in all those, who Believing aright, defile their Souls with criminal Passions, and exclude all life by those Vices and Sensuality, in which they indulge themselves. There are no such signs in all those, who having been engag'd in such grievous Sins, have taken no care to return to God by a sincere Repentance. There are no such signs in all those, whose Souls are possess'd by those Spiritual Vices of Pride, Envy, Hatred, Covetousness, Ambition, &c. Finally, there are no such signs of life in all those, who love not Jesus Christ; since Anathema, or Condemnation is pronounc'd by *S. Paul* against all those who love him not. *1 Cor. 16. 22.* Now, whoever deducts all these, will soon find, to how small a number are reduc'd that little Flock, who are govern'd and live by the Spirit of Christ: And besides these, how miserably subject are all others to the power of Death!

If then the Power of the Enemy be so great, his Malice so successful, and the numbers of those, that fall under him, whether by violence or craft, so very considerable, have we not every one reason to fear, lest we be also made a part of his triumphs, and be unhappily involv'd in this ruin? For if so infinit are the Souls that perish, how can the best of us stand fearless and secure? If we were part of a routed Army, wherein we saw our Companions falling on every side by the Sword of the Enemy, should not we also be struck with Terror, and think our danger great? This then, if we are not already slain, is our danger at present: Souls perish on every hand; they lie before us, like so many Carcasses: and what remedy have we? I know of none, but to joyn with *Mardochæus*, and call in Heaven to our assistance: *O God of Abraham, have mercy on us thy People; for our Enemy designs to destroy us, and ruin thy Inheritance.* For since our Enemy's Power is so much greater than ours, we must necessarily fall too, except we strengthen our Party, and obtain of God to be Confederate with us. All our help then depends in having God on our side; for by this means only can we become Superiour to
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our Enemy, and have sufficient reason to despise him: For if God be with us, who is it will stand against us?

This then ought to be a great part of our business in this holy Time, to prevail with Almighty God, by humble Fasting and fervent Prayer, that he will espouse our Cause, undertake our Protection, and defend us against the Power of our Enemy: that, whereas we are weak and truly unable to stand our ground, and hence have too great reason to despair: He will daily vouchsafe us the powerful Succours of his Grace, and by his assistance defeat all our Enemies designs. But then to obtain this, how serious and truly Christian ought our Fasting and Prayers be? How ought we labour to *put on the whole armour of God*, as the *Apostle* advises, *Truth, Justice, Faith, Hope, &c.* that by the help of these, *we may be able to resist in the evil Day, and stand fast.*

And because the War we are engag'd in, admits of no Truce, and scarce of any Cessation; therefore is it necessary we should be ever employ'd in fortifying our selves by these Vertues, which are our Arms and Defence under God; ever be perfecting our *Faith* and *Hope* in our Lord, and keep our *Justice* or Righteousness in so good repair, as to permit

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no breaches in it, by which we may give the least advantage to our Enemy. Upon this account, is it nothing less than a great stupidity or madness to enter into this combat, naked and unarm'd, that is, without these Virtues; which is nevertheless, the practice of the greatest part of the World, who not only go thus, but even with an excess of Rashness, take pains to open the gates of their Souls to the Devil, make his entrance into their hearts more easy, and his Temptations more pressing and violent. This they do, by conversing with and being fond of such Things or Company, which heighten their Passions, and fill their Spirits with Vanity, and by neglecting such Helps, as might fence them against the Enemy. Now what is to be expected from such conduct as this, but an unhappy end? And may not we reckon them, as already slain, who live after this method; whilst their whole happiness is in the enjoyment of such Satisfaction, which the Devil and World lay before them; and the essential Desire of Salvation (which consists in using the Means) is wholly extinct in their hearts. Deliver us, O God, from blindness and stupidity, that by our folly and indiscretion, we may never expose

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pose our selves to the Snares of the Enemy: Arm us with thy Grace, that we may resolutely withstand all his Assaults; and receive us under thy Protection: for 'tis only by thy Mercy we can be safe.

Thursday

Second Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Jerem. 17. V. 5. ends V. 10.

Cursed is the Man, that places his Confidence in Man, and in his Heart departs from our Lord. The wicked Policy of the Jews is reprehended here, who to strengthen and raise themselves, enter'd into confederacy with the Egyptians, and other strange Nations, and trusted not in the Protection and Promises of God, and therefore this Curse is here pronounc'd against them. Too many Christians are Jews in this point, who for worldly Respects, enter into Society, and take part with sinful and wicked Men, and to preserve their Interest with them, run the hazard of departing from God. Thus too many

ent. *Thursday 2d Week in Lent.* 59

ny, for fear of disobliging Company, joyn and go on vvith them in such Meetings and Diversions, vvhich they see to be prejudicial both to Soul and Body : others carry on and encourage Discourses, truly Uncharitable, unjust, and sinful, merely in compliance vvith those they converse vvith. Others not to lose the opportunity of a Meal, or not to be cast out of a Service, stick not to make a jest of VVickedness, support it by Flattery, and too often concur vvith it to the defiance of Conscience, the breach of Faith, Honesty and Truth : and I vvish, even amongst those, vvwhose Business it is to direct others, there are not some, vvho pass by in silence many a gross Irregularity and Scandal, for fear the deserved reproof of it might put them to the Inconvenience of seeking a nevv Accommodation. And vvhat is all this, but letting vvorldly Respects take place of Duty, and for some iittle Interest, to enter into League vvith Idolaters and Egyptians? This is placing confidence in Man, and departing from our Lord ; and being the Sin of the *Jews*, I vvish it be not attended even vvith a heavier Curse.

100 *Thursday 2d V Week in Lent.*

For my part, I cannot but think it a great reflection on Christianity, to see this intolerable injustice every where prevail, that whether in Private or Publick concerns, 'tis difficult enough to find choice of Persons, in whom a Trust of any concern can with any tolerable Safety be repos'd; but there's ever danger either of loss or miscarriage, thro' the weakness or rather wickedness of the Undertakers, who forcibly carried away by the Power of Private Interest, lose all respect to Conscience and Duty: So that the Justice of any Cause gives now but very weak hopes of Success, but where the Manager's contrivance joyns Interest or Dependance with it. This evil it is, which has corrupted all manner of Courts and Tribunals, and turns them but too often into Chairs of Pestilence: Religion and Gospel is exposed to its abuses, and there's nothing so Sacred, which is not subject to its most detestable Usurpation. And let not Private Persons here presume of their Innocence, by throwing all the blame on those in Publick Employs: for there's scarce such a thing as Innocence, I fear, to be found in this kind. I have already hinted at too many concern'd; and if it be not the Case of all; let those,

those, who think themselves exempt, but faithfully call over even one Week; and 'tis to be fear'd, they'll make a discovery, that 'tis not always *Justice* and *Truth* directs all they say or do; but that *Vanity* and *Flattery*, some *Interest* or *Self-love*, *Fear* or *Compliance*, often influence their Words and Actions; and that for these Base and Unchristian Motives, they abandon the Conduct of Duty and Truth, and are so far Insincere and Faithless to what they pretend.

And what is the ground of all this, but that Jewish weakness condemn'd in this Lesson? Men dare not venture themselves in those ways, where *Vertue* and *Duty* direct them; they dare not trust to those Promises, God has made to such, as walk by these Guides: therefore they make another Interest; seek the favour of *Falshood*, *Dissembling* and *Injustice*, and hope to advantage themselves by the assistance of these Enemies of God, having greater Confidence in their Help, than in his Promises. And is not this truly making Friends with the *Egyptians*, and Nations, that are Strangers to the Living God? Is not this putting Trust in Man, in the Weakness and Sins of Man, in the Suggestions of the Devil, more than

than in God and his Protection? Is not this departing from God, forsaking his ways, and the True way too of being forsaken by God, and drawing down his Curse on their own Heads.

In this point it is but too true, I fear, that *omnes declinaverunt*: All have gone astray: too many in Matters of Consequence: and all in that beaten-track of *Excusing and Defending themselves by Lyes*. This is what is frequent even amongst Pious, tho' not Perfect Christians. They know what in truth, and according to God's Command, they ought to speak: but apprehending some *Anger, Blame or little Reflection*, that *Truth* may bring upon them, they therefore fly to *Untruths* and take shelter under their Protection: they have not Courage enough to venture their Cause and themselves in God's hands, and therefore take up the Devil's arms, and in effect desire him to save them from the harm they fear. And is not the ground of this, a real want of that *Trust and great Confidence*, they ought ever to repose in God: a Confidence, which ought to carry them on securely in the ways of Truth, and make them hazard any inconvenience, rather than have recourse to his Enemy for help: which ought to inspire them with a certain

Thursday 2d Week in Lent. 103

tain Hope, that he will ever stand by them in all the difficulties they foresee, and be a sufficient Recompence for all they suffer, for his sake, that is, for the sake of Truth? This is truly to have a Confidence in God, and not in Man; this is what the Spirit of Christ requires of every one; and 'tis what we ought to Pray for this Day. Pardon us therefore, O merciful Lord, for the many times we have departed from our Duty and Truth upon human Respects, and even forsaken thy ways, upon the weak Motives of Interest, Flattery or Compliance: and grant us now that strength of Spirit, and true Confidence in thee, that we may ever walk on securely in the ways of thy Commandments, and rather venture all inconveniencies under thy Protection, than seek for any help out of Thee.
Amen.

F 4

Friday

Friday

Second Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Gen. C. 37. V. 5. ends V. 22.

BEhold the Dreamer comes; come let us kill him; and we will cast him into an old Pit, and say, a wild beast has devour'd him. They are the words of Joseph's Brethren full of envy and malice against him and designing nothing less than to murder him. This is a proposal of the greatest wickedness, and laid before us in this Lesson, to excite in us a horror and detestation, and let us know, how displeasing all manner of Contention and Uncharitableness is to Almighty God, and how particularly unchristian it is at this holy time. 'Tis now at this time our great business, to make our interest with Heaven, and earnestly apply our selves to such means, as may be most effectual for obtaining pardon of our sins. Now though Fasting and Prayer be requir'd of us by the Church for this end, yet what God exacts, as absolutely necessary, and without

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out which nothing else can possibly prevail, is *Charity*, or the Love of our Neighbour: Therefore it is *S. Peter* gives this advice to Christians: *Above all things be careful ever to preserve mutual Charity among you; for Charity covers a multitude of sins*, 1 Pet. 4. 8 And in *S. Mark* it is declar'd to be *more than all Sacrifices and Offerings*, 12. 33. And has not *S. Paul* expressly let us know, that nothing can avail without it? *If I give all my goods to the poor, though I give my body to be burnt, and have not Charity, it profits nothing.* What then, if we observe this time in *rigorous Fasts*, if we give *liberal Alms* and *Pray*; will this move Heaven at all to favour us, if at the same time we have not Charity for all? The Word of God has said, it will not; and that cannot fail. 'Tis we only shall fail, if we perform our Duty by halves, being nice in one command, and that the less; and being without all Conscience, as to the other, which is infinitely the greater, and such, as on no account can ever be dispens'd with.

As many then as earnestly desire to be reconcil'd with God, by being rais'd from the Death of Sin, must not be wanting in this necessary Duty, which, above all, gives the best assurance of Pardon and of the new Life of Grace. *We know,*

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says S. John, *We are translated from death to life, because we love our brethren,* 1 John 3. 14. The Mark of the Spiritual Resurrection then, according to this Apostle, is *Charity*, or the *Love of our Neighbour*; and 'tis not a probable or uncertain one, but such as is beyond all doubt: *Nos scimus. We know, &c.* If therefore we are solicitous to secure the prospect of our future State, we must not pass by this point, as a matter of indifferency; but imprint it deep within our Souls, That without it, we are most certainly indispos'd for Heaven: This Charity being the most assured sign of Life: 'Tis not then our Neighbours interest, that we love him; 'tis our own much more than his. Our Neighbour may be a good Christian and truly alive to God, though we love him not, but we cannot be so, if we have not this Love of him. The practice then of this Charity, being so much more our own advantage than his; is it not a most unreasonable revenge, to stifle all this Love within our Breast, nay easily to admit Aversion, Ill-will and Hatred against him, on any pretext of contempt, injury or wrong? For is not all this revenge against our selves; 'tis to kill our own Souls, to be reveng'd of him; and is this his punishment or ours? Be not then
so

Friday second Week in Lent. 107

so unwise, to take thy Adversaries part, in being thy own Enemy: 'Tis but a poor satisfaction for the wrong receiv'd, to do thy self more harm, and add to the evil he has done thee. If thou wilt oblige thy Adversary then, do thus: But to befriend thy self, take patiently all the ill receiv'd, preserve thy love to him, and fail not to return him good for evil; thus wilt thou heap coals on his head, and Blessings on thy own: Since God will not fail to espouse thy cause, and abundantly recompence the Injuries receiv'd, as he did in *Joseph*, by frustrating all his Brothers designs, and turning their malice to the encrease of his Glory.

But be here watchful not to deceive thy self: 'Tis but the case of too many; they perswade themselves they have pardon'd their Enemies, and are in Charity with all: But yet can never meet those, by whom they have been injur'd, with any sort of satisfaction; but ever in their Looks and Mein, betray an evident Averſion. And if the not being able to compose themselves, be any excuse for this: What is to be said for those, who in their words discover this dislike, who never mention such Persons, but there's a sort of gall mixt with all they say? So that by their unkind Expressions, and severe

108 *Friday second Week in Lent.*

vere Reflections, and readily catching at every thing that's fit to lessen them, they evidently shew, their Protestations of Love to be deceitful, and that there's still a Canker at the Heart. Believe me, this is a dangerous sign ; and therefore, as those, who discover in themselves any plain Symptoms , or presages of a mortal Sickness, are strangely alarm'd, and take no rest, till, by due means, they have done their best, to prevent the violence of the dreaded evil ; so with more reason ought Christians to labour here : If they observe any sort of aversion or jealousy within themselves ; if they perceive a satisfaction to speak ill of or reflect on any ; or a secret joy at their Misfortunes ; these are ever signs of a dangerous indisposition, and not far from Death ; and ought to awaken their diligence to secure themselves. What a restraint ought they to put on their words and thoughts ; and by special favours to those very persons, strive to wear out the old dislike, by new impressions of a better stamp ? O Christians, how necessary is this, to discharge the heart from all manner of bitterness or aversion ? How necessary is this at this time ; since however earnestly we may sollicite Heaven for pardon of our sins, we have the assurance of God's Word, that we
must

Friday second Week in Lent. 109.

must expect no such grant, except we forgive all others from our hearts? Grant then, O Merciful *Jesu*, that we be in this, thy True Disciples, not deceiving our selves by making a deceitful Peace, but sincerely forgiving all, with all our hearts; that so our Prayers and Fasts may be grateful to thee and we not disappointed in the pardon of our sins, which we now come to ask.

Saturday

Second Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Gen. C. 27. V. 6. ends V. 39.

[*Isaac said to Esau; thy Brother has come and taken thy blessing.* The present Lesson is the History of *Jacob* providing Meat for his Father on his Death-Bed, and receiving his Blessing, before his Brother *Esau* came. *Jacob's* diligence was abundantly rewarded: He gave ear to his Mother's Advice, and losing no time in preparing what his Father lik'd, he obtain'd his Blessing, to the great disappointment of his Brother, coming too late, for what was already given away.

110 *Saturday second Week in Lent.*

away. 'Tis now the Church, our Mother, puts us in mind of the Death of our Redeemer approaching; and earnestly recommends, not to one alone, but to all her Children, to present themselves, with such a Preparation, as they know is most grateful to him, that so they may happily receive his Blessing. And though there be no such thing here, as one disappointing another; since God is infinit in his Goodness and Power, and has Legacies wherewith to enrich all his Children: Yet there are, in this case too, *Jacob's* and *Esau's*: There are those, who by their Fervour and Diligence, like *Jacob*, out-go others, and in the plenty of a speedy Blessing, find the recompence of their Industry and Endeavours: And there are those too, who are so far behind in the just performance of all their Duties, that 'tis to be fear'd, like *Esau*, they loose their Blessing; not by coming too late, but by not coming at all.

The due Preparation of a Christian, such as will effectually draw a Blessing from a Dying Redeemer, requires great care and diligence: And as there was but One out of Two, that obtain'd this Patriarch's Blessing: So 'tis to be fear'd, out of greater numbers, there are but very few, that follow *Jacob's* Diligence,
and

Saturday second Week in Lent. III

and are like to be priviledg'd with him. *Nunc ergo*: Go presently, says his Mother to him, let there be no delays. *Quomodo tam cito invenire potuisti?* Says his Father. The Haft he had made, was the first thing that mov'd and open'd his Father's Heart. 'Tis thus our Mother the Church says to us: *Nunc ergo*: Now, at this time prepare your Souls, and without any delay, by your present Fasting, Alms, Prayer and Self-denials, so purifie them from all Irregularities and sin, that they may be a Delight and even a Banquet to your Lord. This is the Advice of her, who designs for us our Father's Blessing: And how few are they, who with *Jacob's* haft, seriously apply themselves to this Work? There are none, but easily discover, they have a great task on their hands, and that to become truly pleasing to their God, they have very considerable Reformations to make, relating to their Spiritual state. How many as to the governing their Tongue, moderating their Passions, regulating their Affections, ordering their Conversation? How many as to the common Exercises of Piety, their manner of Praying, Fasting, Reading, Confessing, Receiving, &c. *Nunc ergo*. Now then we are commanded to undertake, carry on, and with all our industry endeavour

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deavour to perfect this Work. Happy they, who follow these Directions, and with an equal hand breaking through all the Difficulties of Nature and this World, strongly conclude, all other Satisfaction to be but vain and passing Charms, and that their only Interest is to obtain the Blessing of their Dying Lord; that so it may never come to be their sad fate, with despairing *Esau*, in fruitless Groans and Tears, to testify the sense of their miscarriage, when 'tis too late.

And is it not to be fear'd, this will be one day, all their case, who, like him, go heavily on in a secure dulness; think little of the danger they are in; and trusting to, I know not what, are ever saying within themselves, 'Tis time enough; What need of haste; and thus neglecting all present Means and Helps, live on in sin, till at length surpriz'd, they are presented, not before a Father, but a Judge, and by deserved Punishments are made sensible of all their past Delusions and Neglects? Neglects, I say; for these are generally the first step into that path, which leads to Vice and Hell. For why is it, the greatest number of Christians pray no better? They will not take the pains necessary for this work: They do, as far as may be done with.

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Saturday second Week in Lent. 113

with ease; but when the business requires an earnest application, and laborious care, here they give over their task and yield. The same's the reason, why they Fast not as they ought; why they master not Temptations, nor avoid the Occasions of sin: Because being Lovers of themselves and of their ease, they have not heart or resolution to stand against those difficulties, which must necessarily be master'd to discharge their duty: But they rather choose to accept the satisfactions of infirmity and sin, than take that trouble, to which their Obligation calls them. For want of this trouble and pains, they first neglect, then quite omit those Duties, God requires of them; then sin and vice creep on, till by degrees, the whole inward Man becomes corrupt: And thus poor, miserable, deceived Souls, to indulge themselves the satisfaction of a short and very imperfect ease, they loose all hopes of Rest eternal; and to avoid a passing Trouble, such as has its comforts too, they blindly cast themselves into everlasting pains. Thus they go on unthinking and secure, and like *Esau*, see but little of any disappointment, till it shews it self, and their own misery removes their blindness. Prevent, O Lord, we beseech thee, all our actions by thy heavenly nly .

114 Saturday second Week in Lent.

venly Grace, and so quicken us in every Duty; that being never discourag'd through fear or trouble, we may overcome all Sloth and Negligence, and thus performing all our Obligations with a just diligence, we may be worthy to partake of the Merits of our Dying Lord, and receive his Blessing.

Third Sunday in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Ephes. C. 8. V. 1. ends V. 9.

Brethren, walk in Charity and Love, even as Christ loved us, and gave himself for us an Oblation to God. The Model, by which we are to regulate our Love towards our Neighbour, is the Love of Jesus Christ towards us; which was such, as not only to bear patiently with the Unworthy, and bestow his Graces on them; but likewise to give his Life a Sacrifice for all. See here our rule: 'Tis by this we are to endeavour, not to let our Patience be overcome by any Provocations whatever can be given us; and to have a general desire to do good to all, without letting the Unworthiness of any in particular freighten this good dispo-

disposition of our Hearts: And besides this, we ought to be ever ready to give our Life for our Neighbour, because his Salvation is infinitely more valuable than our life. This last part includes the former, as being most perfect, and we have often occasions offer'd of practising it, as to some of its branches. For if our Obligation be to give our life for his Salvation, much more are we bound, to part with our Goods, our Rest and our Time. How are we oblig'd to renounce many Satisfactions, to be ever cautious in avoiding every thing, that may give him offence, or any ways hinder his Salvation, and be careful to edifie him in the example of such Virtues, as may invite him to good? For certainly the obligation of laying down our Life here prescrib'd, by the example of Christ, reaches so far, as to bind us to do every thing that may be necessary in order to his Happiness, and avoid every thing, that can be a hindrance to it.

How great a tie then have they, who being the Substitutes of Christ, have taken on them the care of Souls? Their *Lives* ought to be ever ready, much more their *Time*, their *Rest*, and all their *Satisfaction*s to be abandon'd for their Neighbours good: Their Charge is to take place of all: So that whatever

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ver may be as dear to them as their Hand or Eye, 'tis all to be cut off, rather than give offence to any little one : For if Life's to be the purchase of their good, there's nothing under this can be dispens'd with.

And may not here Parents, Masters, Magistrates, and all of the better Rank in this see, how great their Obligation is of discharging well their Duty, that none under their charge be prejudic'd by their *want of care*, by *ill example* ! For how do they give their Life for their Neighbour, who because they will not take the pains, let him want such things, as may be the greatest helps for his Salvation ? How many are daily lost, for not having had their due Instruction ? How many violently hurried into Vice, by those very Passions, which their Parents *Negligence*, or *Fond Self-Love* have brought them up to ? 'Tis the great Misfortune of too many in their tender Years, to have had no other Education, than what *Nature* suggested to their Parents ; so that as these were either of an *Insensible*, *Negligent*, or *Fond Temper* ; so generally their Children suffer ; and whilst the consequences of either extreme are equally pernicious to a Christian Life ; how highly deficient are these Parents in this
Duty

Duty, of giving their Life for their Neighbour, who, in a case, where it presses most, will not so far deny themselves, as to go out of their *Natural way*, though their Childrens Souls, but too much depend on the Method they take?

Their Crime is not much inferiour, whose Station in a Family makes them remarkable, so that what they do, becomes an Example to others, whether Equals, or of a lower Rank: For seeing the Disorders of their Life, are an Encouragement to others, to lessen their respect for Virtue, and even draw them the same way; what Christians are they, who being oblig'd to part with Life for their Neighbour's Soul, will not deprive themselves of their wonted Satisfactions, or quit an ill custom, to prevent their ruine? They go on still, think how to please themselves; but think not of that *Woe* pronounc'd against those, who give scandal to their Neighbour: For certainly as many *Woe's* belong to them, as there are Souls prejudic'd by their ill Example: Every one lost by them is a new Curse on their Heads: And this is the unfortunate exchange they make: They will not give their Life as God requires, or any Satisfaction for their Neighbours good;

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good ; but, to 'do him harm, they give away their Souls.

Is there not again something of this Miscarriage in the too frequent Discourse of many ? Some please themselves in Oaths, some in Obscene Jests, and others in Unclean Discourse, such as *S. Paul* here says, ought not to be Nam'd amongst Christians And for others, who pretend to Piety, how often by their Flatteries, do they encrease the Distempers of their Neighbours Souls ? They plainly see the Infirmities, to which they are subject : And though for these, they often expose them behind their Backs, making them the subject of their Wonder and their Scorn ; yet before their Face, they fail not, by false Praises, and forc'd Arguments, to augment those very evils, which they heartily condemn : 'Tis thus, Pride and Curiosity, Jealousies, Contentions, Animosities, Expensive Gaming and Entertainments, with many other Vicious Passions, grow up in too many, and Christianity, by the same degrees, most certainly decays. And Where's their Charity all this while, who being bound, to contribute to the Spiritual Advantage of their Neighbour, make it their common

Third Sunday in Lent. 119

common Practice, to encrease his Evils, and help to overthrow his Soul? O God! Is this the Charity of Christ our Lord to us? Is this according to the Model he has left us? Deliver me, O Jesu, from this fundamental error; and since thou hast been pleas'd to give thy Life for thy Servants, permit me not, by any ways to oppose this design of thy Mercy, by injuring those, whom thou hast purchas'd at so dear a rate: May I ever joyn with thee, in contributing to their good, and for this end, be ever willing, not only to quit my Evil Customs, my Ease, my Goods, but even my Life too; for thus only can I pretend to Love my Neighbour, as thou hast Loved us.

Munday

Munday,

Third Week in Lent.

LESSON.

IV King. C. 5. V. 6. ends V. 15.

E *Liseus* said to *Naaman* : *Go and wash seven times in Jordan, and thou shalt be cleans'd.* Washing once in *Jordan*, if God had so pleas'd, might have perfectly deliver'd *Naaman* from his Leprosy : but he commands him Seven times to wash ; to signify to us, (for all was then done in figure) the repeated endeavours and care, we ought to have, in using those Means, which God has appointed for our Spiritual Cure. 'Twas the Sacrament of Penance was then shewn us in a Type ; and in those My-sterious Washings may not we see, with what great Diligence, we ought to apply our selves to every Part ? Not slightly pass over our Examens, but with the strictest eye, search into every corner of our Soul, look diligently and look again, that so we be not impos'd on with false colours, fair pre-texts, and under these disguises, permit gross evils to defile our Souls. Alas !
How

Munday third VWeek in Lent. 121

How many ill Habits, how many dangerous and even sinful Passions, express'd but too often in Words and Actions, are found in those, who go to this *Jordan*, and by Confession think to wash themselves? 'Tis the misfortune of too many, not to see their own Infirmities; and tho' they are quick-sighted enough to observe and condemn many Evils in their Neighbour; yet they see them not, when 'tis what they fall into themselves: Thus we carry many Evils with us unseen to Confession and to the Grave, because we examine our selves but with passing glances, take what appears at first sight, what is gross and notorious; but as for variety of Spiritual Sins, which lie under many folds of Self-love, Interest, Convenience, Pride, &c. these are but too long undiscern'd; because they require a long observation, a watchful and impartial eye to make the discovery. Have we not reason then, with *David*, often to beg; *Illumina, Domine, tenebras meas*: Enlighten, O Lord, we beseech thee, our Darknes; and add to our Prayer, our best endeavours to know our selves, make frequent Searches, and omit no care, that may be necessary; and yet be very careful too not to increase the darkness by being Scrupulous? G The

122 *Munday third Week in Lent.*

The like is necessary as to the other Part : 'Tis easy thinking , we are truly Sorry for our Sins , and that we truly purpose to amend ; and 'tis as easy being deceiv'd in this. What if these thoughts of Sorrow are fram'd and truly pass thro' our Understanding : may not all this be , and our hearts still the same ; Proud , Perverse , Corrupt ? And who shall remove this uncertainty, and with assurance, determine, as often as we Confess , whether our Sorrow be Hearty and Real , or only Imaginary and in Conceit ? 'Tis true, the Fruits of Repentance appearing in *virtuous Endeavours* and a *Better Life*, is what affords some Peace : but yet we are generally in the dark, a Darkness, which is both the effect and Punishment of Sin , and therefore to be submitted to as Just ; and very capable of being made use of to our advantage ; to balance that Pride , to which we are subject ; to keep us in a perpetual Dependence, and to oblige us frequently to renew our Sorrow , often to excite our detestation of past Sins , never to be over-confident of what we have already done, but still endeavour to do better ; that so, if there has been any Defects thro' want of Care , all those may be now supply'd ; and that by our present
fervours

ent. *Munday third Week in Lent.* 223

other truly truly fy be these d tru: may ill the upt? ainty, as of r Sor- y Ima- e, the n vir- ife, is et we kness, nment nitted being o bal- re sub- Depen- ly to te our be o- ready etter; Defects ay be resent- ervous

fervour we may now regain the favour of Heaven, and thus prevent all possible Miscarriage. *Lava sepius*; Wash therefore Seven times. Use still thy best endeavours to repent; but still remember often to repeat the same; Repent and still repent again.

The same method is to be observ'd in the Third Part, which is *Satisfaction*: For tho, a Sinner, by his sincere Repentance and Absolution, has receiv'd New Life; yet this Life is generally so languishing and infirm, that 'tis hard preserving it, except due care be us'd, to strengthen it by continual Exercises of Piety. The Consequences of Sin are many, and many ill effects it leaves behind it on the Soul, by which 'tis often in danger of relapsing: and there's no more assured means of removing these, than by following that very method, prescrib'd as the remedy of sin. And when a Christian seems something advanc'd beyond this State of Weakness. and that he's in some manner establish'd in a Spiritual Life; yet ought he to continue still his exercise of Penance; in proportion to the irregularities of his former Life. For it being the practice of the Primitive Church, for the more grievous sins, to appoint Penances of several Years, and sometimes of the

124 *Munday third VWeek in Lent.*

whole Life; tho' this be not now en-
joyn'd; yet, the Spirit of the Church
being unchangeable, 'tis but just, Peni-
tents should still preserve the same Di-
sposition of heart, which she design'd to
imprint in them by those longer Penan-
ces. This Disposition is that *Spirit of*
Penance, by which a Christian is to ma-
nage all Difficulties whatever of his life,
as likewise to practise many Self-denials
and Holy Exercises, and having ever his
sins in view, make them all Sin-Offer-
ings, to appease and satisfie the Justice
he has provok'd; all which he may hope
will find acceptance thro' the Merits of
his Suffering Lord, with whom he joyns
in all he does. *Lava Septies.* Wash
therefore seven times, and, as the Holy
Fathers advise, be ever mindful of thy
Sins, that so thou may'st ever preserve
an **Humble Mind**, and with this Mind
accept all troubles as from the hand of
Justice, which punishes sin. Preserve,
O Lord, this Spirit of Penance within
us, that so we may not carelessly make
use of those Means thou hast appointed
for our good: But with Diligence and
Humility perform all thou requir'st
from our hands.

Tuesday

Tuesday

Third Week in Lent.

LESSON.

4 Kings C. 4. V. 1. ends V. 7.

E *Lisens* said to the Widow : *Go, sell the Oyl and pay thy Creditor what is his due, and do thou and thy Children live of the rest.* A good Direction for such as are in Debt, first to satisfy their Creditors, and then to live of what remains ; *to live*, the Prophet says ; for if this may be, 'tis well : He allows nothing to keep up *State*, or feed *Extravagancies* : These are all to be retrench'd, when *Justice* calls for what is usually spent in their support. These Conditions the Prophet left, and thus was this miraculous supply to be divided betwixt her Creditors and her own *Necessities*. Now, if all Abilities and Estate, which others have, are equally the Gift of God with this, ought not the same method still to be observ'd ? What means then the daily Expences of so many in Sports, Diversions, Vanities, Excess ; whilst their poor Creditors are wanting *Necessaries*,

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saries, and would gladly feed on the very Crumbs of what they prodigally cast away? Where's the Justice of this Method; Nay. where's the Christianity, whilst *Justice* is thus left out? And what's their Plea? Nothing but the *Inconvenience* or *Difficulty* of doing otherwise. They are willing to be just and satisfy all; but this is attended with so many Inconveniencies. And are not these Nice Christians now, who would go along with every Duty, as far as they can go with ease, but then shake hands with it, when there appears a *Difficulty*? Is it not to be fear'd, they'll do the like with other Virtues, with *Faith*, with *Charity* and *Hope*, and e'en quit these too, when they can be no longer easie in their Profession? Methinks, the renouncing one, is enough to raise this Jealousie. For certainly those True Christians, who are ready to suffer all Extremities for their Faith, both as to their Persons, Family, Estate and Life, would with a proportion'd willingness, be ready to accept the like, rather than forsake the Cause of other Virtues: They know, there's no one virtue, but may have its Martyrs; and, no question, have an assured Hope, of meeting with the same Reward, whether they suffer for *Justice*, or for *Faith*:
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And on this score, are very careful, never to tire their Creditors with unwelcome delays, in favour of themselves and their own convenience; but ever choose to satisfy Justice, notwithstanding variety of difficulties, which may attend the performing this Duty: For whatever in this case they come to suffer, they know it is for Justice sake. Pay then thy Creditor what is his due, and live thou of what remains.

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Besides these, there are other Debts, which every Christian, with the like exactness, is bound to satisfy: And 'tis now a proper time to sum up these Accounts. See then now, how much thou stand'st indebted, for all thou hast ever rashly or designedly spoke to the prejudice or lessening of thy Neighbour. See again, what injury thou hast done him by thy ill Example, how far thou hast, in words or actions, encourag'd him to evil; what dangerous, nay sinful Impressions thou hast made in his Soul, by thy prophane and lewd Discourses, which, it may be, have been the first step to his ruine: And if thou art so happy to discover nothing of this; yet see, at least, what damage thou hast done him, by being wanting in thy seasonable Advice and good Instruction; for silence too is often follow'd with weighty

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Mischiefs. How many hast thou seen both say and do such things, as truly deserv'd Reproof, for which thou hast unprofitably censur'd them behind their backs, but hast not had Charity enough to inform them of these Failings betwixt thy self and them? Thus for want of a friendly Monitor, have they advanc'd in evil, which upon a seasonable Reproof might probably have been redress'd; thus at least, might'st thou have delivered thy own Soul from the guilt of their sins, for which now, it may be, thou stand'st indebted.

Consider then now all these Debts, thou hast contracted by thy ill Example, by Detraction, Neglect, or Uncharitable Silence; and see, which way to satisfy them: I believe, thou wilt find none more effectual, than that here suggested by the *Widows Oyl*, which, as *S. Augustine* says, signifies that *Mercy* and *Compassion*, we are bound to shew to others. Whilst this Widow had only a little Oyl to serve her self, she could pay no Debts; but having more Vessels full, she then discharg'd this Duty. If thy Charity extends not beyond thy self, thou may'st be still considerably in Debt; but if once it begins to abound and flow to every Neighbour, thus may'st thou hope in time to even all Accounts. Ob-
serve

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serve then diligently on every side, and see, where any distress calls for thy assistance: Let those have the first place, whom thou hast any ways injur'd; but if this can't be, lay hold of every opportunity, that presents it self, and endeavour still to shew such a Charity, as may have a proportion to thy past Faults. Reflect then what chiefly these have been, and so let thy present Charity be regulated. Thus may'st thou exercise thy self, in being favourable in every thing thou hear'st, in which thy Neighbours Reputation is any ways concern'd: In being careful to give good Example, discountenance all evil ways, and encourage Virtue; in instructing and laying sound Principles in all thou may'st: In Charitable Advice, and, as far as it may be with hopes of benefit, seeking fit opportunities of putting every one in mind of their Failings, so to contribute to their amendment. Thus if thou art careful to extend thy Charity, and distribute this Oyl of Mercy on every side, by this means thou wilt pay thy Debts, and satisfy for all thy past Transgressions, and of what remains, thy Soul will live: For nothing gives us a surer Title to God's Mercies, than that Mercy we shew to others. Grant then, O Merciful Lord, that by practising this

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constant Charity to others, I may obtain a discharge of all those sins, by which I have any ways injur'd my Neighbour; for as these have brought Death on my Soul, so 'tis only by their release my Soul can live,

Wednesday

Third Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Exod. C. 20. V. 12. ends V. 24.

THe People said to *Moses*: *Speak thou to us, and we will hear, but let not God speak to us lest we die*: This Lesson contains the second Table of the Law; that is, all the Commandments relating to our Neighbour. Now Almighty God appear'd so terrible to the People of the *Jews*, in publishing these his Laws, that wholly surpriz'd with fear, they cry'd out; *Let not God speak to us*. I believe, were God now to expound these his Laws to Christians, they would be seiz'd with no less a terrour than the *Jews* in this first promulgation; and find so much greater obligation in them,
than

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than they commonly imagine, that they would cry out with them : *Let not God speak to us, lest we die.* This is the great misfortune of too many ; they make so large a construction of the Commandments, in favour of their own Inclinations, Interest and Passions, that they deceive themselves, in thinking they keep them, whilst they live in the open breach of them. Is not this the occasion of what we observe in the Lives of great numbers ? They say and do such things, which raise wonder and scandal in all their Sober Friends, and gives offence to Strangers : And yet go and discourse the point with them, and you'll discover a certain peace and security, accompanying them even in actions, that are wholly unjustifiable : For they have found the expedient of some ill-reason'd Case, by which they open the Narrow Way, and make it Wide enough for them to go on, without renouncing themselves, or laying down the Corruptions of Nature : Hence it is, we see very great Uncharitableness, Animosities, Contentions, most intolerable Injustices, Frauds, Over-reachings, and variety of other Evils, even amongst those, who are reputed Honest and Good ; nay, and this, as they seem to delude themselves, without ever break-

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ing any one Commandment : Thus they go on, charm'd into a false Peace, by the violence of their own Passions, which they mistake for Reason, and thus they live : But now if Almighty God should once please to interpret his own Law to them, how would this sight of themselves and their own wickedness fill them with dread, and make them cry out with the *Jews* ; *Let not God speak to us, lest we die* : For they would see nothing but Death before them, as the necessary consequence of their Unchristian Proceedings.

And what is the first step to this misfortune, but their refusing that other part, which the *Jews* desir'd ? They said : *Let Moses speak to us, and we will hear* : But these will be under the conduct of no *Moses* : Except, after frequent trial, they can find such an one, as will indulge their Inclinations, and suggest to them cases even to make their Vices lawful. He that will permit them, at least, to go on their own way, shall be their Director, and thus they proceed into the mouth of Hell with some satisfaction, so they have but a Guide to go with them. But if he proves one as will not, in silence, be witness of all their Extravagancies, but with severe Censures, at all fit opportunities, declares

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clares against them, then such an one is not a *Moses* for them.

This is the condition of many: But their number is greater, who being sensible of a heavy weight on their Conscience, and seeing their Souls lying under great and very dangerous disorders, such as require the assistance of the most skilful hand, purposely however avoid those, whom they know to be thus experienc'd; and choose to go to one, who will only hear, but say nothing to them; or else find out some Stranger, who being unacquainted with the true state of their Souls, cannot apply to them Remedies proper for their Cure. Thus they pretend to Repent, and yet over-rul'd by a sort of Vicious Modesty, or blinded with Pride, they decline those, who would best help them to amend. And what is this, but shuffling with their Duty, and deceiving themselves with the Form, but having no sincerity in their Hearts, since having *Moses* to speak to them, they desire not to hear him?

Another great occasion of this evil amongst Christians, is their general unwillingness to have any sort of *Moses* speak to them, or put them in mind of the common Failings, which they

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they observe in them. 'Tis but too undeniable a truth, that we have all our Faults, though 'tis true, some greater than others; and although we profess, that we desire to Love God and save our Souls; though we believe our Sins are our only Enemies, that can possibly hinder the obtaining these Eternal Goods; yet who is there can bear the being minded of their Faults: Who is there can sincerely say in this case: *Let Moses speak to us, and we will hear?* For my part among all the Tasks, that belong to a Christian, I know of none more difficult than this: For though you may freely tell any of a Discomposure or Spot in their Cloaths nay of Dirt in their Face and be thank'd; yet scarce so, if you tell them of their Faults. Hence it is too often, Friends, that live together, and are Friends in every thing else, are not at all so in this; but seeing Failings in one another, dare not venture to speak; but either wanting courage themselves to be Christian Friends, or apprehending some ill consequence, they let them go on, till at length, when Death comes, they have God to speak to them in Terror, because they would not accept
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of a *Moses* to do it before-hand in Peace.

This shews, what a Pride we have within us, and how much we suspect it in every Neighbour; it shews, how much we are govern'd by *Humane Respects*, and how little of *true Christian Charity* there is amongst Christians. It shews us, what a Task we have on our hands, and how unfit we are for the Devotion and Piety of this holy time. Infinitely miserable we are and weak, and yet infinitely Proud. Let us beg then this Day an effectual remedy of all our evils: That we may be so exact in all our Duties, that we need not fear to have God himself speak to us: That in the mean time he will inspire a *True Moses* to direct us, give us grace to hear and follow him, and as we desire to amend our Faults, so also be ever willing to be inform'd of them.

Thursday

Thursday.

Third Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Jerem. C. 7. V. 1. ends V. 7.

TRUST not in Lying Words, saying; *The Temple of our Lord, the Temple of our Lord.* The False Prophets perswaded the Jews, that having the Temple of our Lord with them, they need not doubt of being ever in his favour and Protection, notwithstanding all their iniquities and perverse ways. Therefore Almighty God informs them of this Imposture, commanding his Prophet to stand in the Gate of the Temple, and say: *Hear the word of the Lord, all you men of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship. Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, amend your ways and your works, and I will dwell with you in this place: Trust not in lying words, saying, the Temple of our Lord, &c.* Thus letting them know, there was no trusting at all for them in the Temple, but only in the Amendment of their lives. And is not this advice

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advice now as necessary for us, as for the Jews; since we are not less easy in hearing False Prophets, and trusting in Lying words, than they? We are born into this World with Falsity, Deceit and Lyes mix'd with our very Nature: these grow up and are strengthen'd in us, by our Nurses, Attendants, and very Parents, who all contribute, by their mistaken and hurtful kindness, to make us in love with our selves, to be obstinate in our own ways, to be violent in every thing we desire, to come to an early knowledge of and be fond of Vanities, to admire Novelties, to be charm'd with Curiosities, with variety of such like unprofitable Qualifications, which is indeed nothing else but harkning to False Prophets and Lyes. For 'tis to be taught to value that, as Good and Advantageous, which indeed are the only things, that can possibly ruine us; 'tis to be taught such Lessons, which, if ever we come to the knowledge of our own good, we must then labor, all the remainder of our lives, to unlearn. Thus we begin our lives; and when our Youthful years afterwards put us forth into the World, we are commonly lead on in the same path: for what is it but False Prophets and Lying words, that encourage Young people in the

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the Practice now of more dangerous Vanities, in expensive Diversions and hurtful Entertainments; What is it but these, make them in love with the World, with its Follies and Pleasures? And are they not the same, that impose on those of a riper Age; since there is no Age exempt from the charms of Titles, Honours, State, Riches, &c? These are generally look'd on as Substantial and Desirable Goods, such as bring Rest to the Possessors: 'tis with this Thought we are often carried on in most of our Undertakings, seeing Happiness, as we imagine, at a distance before us, and often promising our selves Blessings, if we can but accomplish our Designs; and when all comes to be in our Power, the Possession falls so much short of our hopes, that in the enjoyment, we experience all to be Vanity and Lyes.

This same method of Falsity and Lying we pursue in our Spiritual Life. We promise at the Font to Renounce the Devil and World, with all their works and pomps, and after this Solemn engagement, spend a great part of our Lives in the Profession and Practice of what we have renounc'd. We pretend to Humility, and live in Pride; we seek our selves and commend Self-denials:

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we value Charity, and on every occasion are acting against it; we make profession of the Love of God, and yet our whole business, is Interest, Vanity, and the World.

Thus we go on still in our very Devotions and pretended Flights towards Heaven: We lift up our Voices to our Creator, and often Call him, *Our Lord and our God*; but without the Obedience and Love due to him on these Titles: We pray that *his Will be done*: but at the same time rebel against him and follow our own. How often do we cry for mercy, and say; *We Repent and are Sorry, and heartily troubled for having offended, and Resolve to amend*: But where is the Change of the heart, where the true dispositions of a Contrite Soul? O certainly, were it all true, as we say, we should not be so easy in neglecting our Duty, and relapsing into our former Weaknesses. Again, how do we often *Kneel, Bow down, Strike our Breasts, Lift up our Eyes, our Hands, and our Voice*, and in these Motions pretend a Reverence to our Lord, and Desires of approaching to him, when God knows, at the same time, we are void of all Respect, and our Hearts are far from him? Thus we live on in Lyes, and a great part of our Confidence, is
Trusting

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Trusting in Lying words : on these false grounds is built a great part of our Devotion and Piety; and, when the Searcher of Hearts has separated all the dross and shews of our Holiness, how small a portion of what is Solid and True, will remain behind !

O God, how miserable are we ! We confess our weakness here before thee : and own that our whole lives are a mixture of Flattery , Presumption, Deceit and Lyes. We know, that however we have thy Truth , thy Faith, thy Temple and Church with us, all this will not avail to Salvation , except we have Truth in our Lives, except we do what we say , and practise what we profess. Inspire then, O God , our Hearts with the light of thy Truth, that we may be sincere in all our Duties , and ever remember , that except we amend our ways, thou wilt not dwell with us.

Friday

Friday.

Third Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Numb. C. 20. V. 2. ends V. 13.

THE Children of Israel assembled themselves against Moses and Aaron, and, in a seditious way, said to them; give us water, that we may drink. This People being press'd with Thirst in the Desert, had recourse to Moses and Aaron for their relief: And though the manner of their Address, in a Tumultuous way, be not at all commendable; yet certainly the earnest application they made, in their Necessities, to the Servants of God, under whose conduct they had been placed, is a thing worthy of our imitation, being approv'd by Heaven it self in some manner, in supplying them with a Miraculous Fountain issuing out of a Rock. There's no question, but Moses and Aaron, having the care of this People, were oblig'd to have prevented this Tumult by their seasonable Instructions; and God sufficiently censur'd this their omission,

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sion, by charging them with the sinful Unbelief of their Flock, and not permitting them to lead the People into the Land of Promise, in punishment of their offence. 'Tis plain, as many as have others under their care, as in this, they have a place of Honour, so 'tis a charge too, and such, as brings the weight of many others sins upon them, besides their own; so that while they have reason to be satisfied many times with the state of their own well-order'd Conscience, they are still very criminal in the sight of God, by reason of the sins of those entrusted with them, which ought to have been prevented by their care. 'Tis often an indulgent and easie Temper, that's very unwilling to disturb it self, or others, passes by many faults, and gives them time to grow into great disorders. Others are contented to go on in the steps of their Predecessors, taking in all their Faults as well as their Employment; not enquiring, what their Duty obliges them to; but only, whether they go on in the track; as if to erre by Evample, would be an Apology for their going out of the way. Others again, out of a downright neglect of their Duty, and the little concern they have, how things go with those under their charge, give all opportunity possible

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ble to the Enemy to sow his Tares, while they are thus asleep: And hence it is, we see so much Corruption spread it self, and even reign amongst Christians; because they, whose obligation it is, by their watchful care, to keep up good Discipline, and remedy, as far as in them lies, all growing disorders, go on insensible of their charge, and vainly think themselves to be good Christians, while at the same time, they are *Ill Parents, Careless Masters, or Negligent Pastors*. But certainly, this is a fatal Error, and attended with most pernicious consequences, such as, notwithstanding their supposed Innocence, makes their Sins as numerous, as are the Extravagancies of all those, under their care, which have been occasion'd by their Connivance, or Neglect. These are therefore to remember, they have more Souls, besides their own, to give an account of, and that being happily free from all Personal sin, they may be still unfortunately excluded from the Land of Promise, for the sins of others, whose guilt falls on them.

But whatever is the neglect of those, under whose charge we are, yet this do's not at all excuse Christians, for those many Spiritual Necessities and Defects, under which they lie, for want
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of this care, For if God, in his Goodness, has appointed others to watch over and direct us, yet he has not in this dispens'd with our taking care of our selves. And therefore, as the *Israelites*, in their Necessity, staid not in their Tents, there to perish for Thirst, but with all the eagerness possible, applied themselves to *Moses* and *Aaron*, saying, *Give us water, that we may drink.* So Christians ought to do. And they do it indeed, in all their Temporal wants; very few being so forgetful or careless, but if they see themselves like to suffer, thro' their neglect, whose business it is to assist them, they presently make their Necessities known, they speak and speak again; and if any other interest besides their own, be necessary to prevail, they fail not to procure it; and if nothing succeeds, they know to change Masters and Places, rather than want where they are. Thus all in the Affairs of this World, see where to go, and are not backward in crying out, *Give us water, that we may drink.* But how few are they, that do it in the concerns of the Soul? How many do we find, that pass for true *Israelites*, think themselves true Christians and Catholicks, and yet are under very great Spiritual Necessities, having their Souls near starving for

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for want of due Knowledge and Instruction in their Duties, and yet go on in silence, without asking for help? Some there are, that go to Mass for many Years, and know very little or nothing of it: Others go to the Sacraments as long, having the Form, but understand little of their Substance, or the due Preparation requir'd on their parts: Others live in the constant practice of wronging their Neighbours, and know not, what Justice is: Others in daily defaming their Neighbours, in Contentions, Ill will and dislike of them, and know not what Charity is: Others in habitual Obstinacy, Pride and sinful Self-Love, and know not what Humility is: Thus of all states and Conditions there are too many very considerably wanting, not only in the Practice, but even in the knowledge of their most Essential Duties; and tho' all this be but too often occasion'd by the silence and neglect of those, under whose care they are, and will fall one day so heavy on them, as to exclude them from the Land of Promise; yet why do they themselves sit still under these Necessities, and not seek for remedy, by demanding help from such, as are able to assist them? Why do they not as earnestly cry out for the water of Life, to refresh their

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Souls,

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Souls, as for the relief of their Temporal wants? The *Spiritual* is much the greater concern of the two, and requires the greater diligence and industry for its supply: And however Christians may find fair pretexts to disguise their Sloth and Neglect; yet, when they shall see those set over them, shut out from Happiness for their omission, what hopes will they then have of a Reward, who have thus neglected themselves, having been ever solicitous to call for help in their Corporal Distress, but sought no remedy for their Spiritual?

Deliver us, O Lord, from this stupidity, and quicken all thy Servants with a new zeal, that they may all, in their several degrees, discharge their respective Duties. That such as have any kind of Superiority, may be every way just to their charge, and such as are Inferiors, may in no ways be wanting to themselves: Thus will thy Mystical Body be well-pleasing to thee on Earth, and be prepar'd for a greater perfection in Heaven.

Saturday

Saturday

Third Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Dan. C. 13. V. 1. ends V. 62.

Daniel cryed with a loud voice : *I have no hand in the blood of Susanna : Are you so senseless, O Israelites, that, without examination or knowledge of the truth, you have condemn'd a daughter of Israel ? Return again to Judgment.* They are like to keep but an ill Lent, who being careful in Fasting, have at the same time a hand in their Neighbour's Blood : And though it is to be hop'd, there are but very few so unfortunately miserable, as to fall under this guilt; yet when we reflect, there's a *Murdering* People in their *Reputation and good Name*, as well as in their *Persons* ; then we have reason to turn to the other extreme, and fear there are very few, that are Innocent : Very few, who with *Daniel* can cry out, *I have no hand in my Neighbour's Blood.* For certainly, though the greatest number of Christians are so tender-hearted,

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as to have a horroir at the very thoughts of shedding blood; yet this other way of Murthering is grown so very familiar, that it is the matter of ordinary Entertainments, and daily subject of Diversi-
on: So that whenever we come unexpected into Company, and surprize them in their Mirth, 'tis great odds, but upon examination, you'll find, they are ripping up their Neighbour's Sores, widening his wounds, and have truly their hands in his blood. And the misery is, they are at the same time unnaturally murdering themselves too, since there's nothing brings more certain Death on a Soul, than thus offending against Charity, which is the bond of perfection and Principle of Christian Life: And in this double Murther consists the greatest part of Christian Entertainment and Mirth.

And I believe, whoever will take the pains to look into the particulars of these diverting Discourses, will discover this great aggravation of *Injustice* generally accompanying their *Uncharitableness*, that, as in *Susanna's* case, 'tis *without examination or knowledge of the Truth*, they condemn whomever they condemn. 'Tis true, if we observe the common method of the Relations they make, 'tis with that positiveness and great assurance of
Truth,

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Truth, that one would imagine, they were all Eye-witnesses of what they report ; when a little enquiry, will soon lay open this Truth, that indeed they have no certainty of what they say ; but it all comes to, *Such an one says so*, and *I was told so* ; which at the best are nothing but *Second* and *Third-hand* Truths, that is so notoriously alter'd, and disfigur'd, that if, by good luck, they come again to the first Reporter, he has difficulty enough, under so many disguises, to find them to be his own. So that in reality, the greatest part of what we thus hear, however with the face of Truth, are certainly no better than wilful, or affected Mistakes, weak Surmises, bias'd Constructions, and, without any sort of rash Judgment, one may conclude upon the first hearing, 'tis ten to one they are false. And therefore I cannot but look on them, either as little Friends to Truth, or very dull Observers of the common defects of Narratives, who dare either *Believe* or *Report*, with any sort of Confidence, whatever it be they hear in this kind. *I hear it*, is the utmost they can say : But if they go on and assert it *to be so*, 'tis not without evident danger of an Untruth.

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Every one, though of mean capacity, is sensible, how little grace there is in making an *uncertain or doubtful Relation*: And if the *Account of Fact* be lame, as to some *Circumstances*, they know it vwill come short of vwhat they intend, in diverting or gratifying the Company: This reflection, is a Temptation too strong to be resisted by the greatest part of Christians, and therefore, rather than any thing shall be vvanting to their Story, they choose to have the Weakness in themselves, and so making bold vvith Truth, they make such advantageous Additions to their Relation, that it may every vvay appear compleat. Hence it is, vve have reason to suspect the greatest part of vwhat vve hear, to have something of Romance in it; for as in this, there is generally some ground of true History, yet so set forth, especially the Heroe, vvith so many colours laid on, that if a Man be not vvell inform'd before-hand, he shall certainly bepossess'd vvith very false Notions: So here, the vweakness of Man is such, that every Story he relates, is but too commonly what he makes his Heroe, and, I fear, the itch of laying on colours, puts him upon setting it forth with some advantageous disguise. The experience of this general infirmity, is what is sufficient to oblige

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oblige us to suspend all Judgment at least, if not distrust of the exactness of what we hear, and not join with those, who are bold in what they assert concerning their Neighbour.

Then, if we consider, how easie most People are in *mistaking* and making *wrong application* of what they hear and see, nay, of relating their *own Inferences and Constructions* for the *Fact* it self, 'tis again what is sufficient to encrease this our distrust. This is a misfortune or oversight even of good and well-meaning People; we see it in the Apostles themselves, *John c. 21.* Christ had but said to *Peter*, concerning *John*; *Thus will I have him continue till I come*: When presently a report was spread amongst the Brethren, *that John was not to die*: When Christ said no such thing, but only, *Thus I will have him continue till I come*; now if these good Men were thus unwary, as to report this *Construction of their own* for the *Truth*, and make it so very different from what was spoke or intended by Christ; what is to be expected from others, who being inferior to them in all Christian Qualifications, are not so very cautious or scrupulous as they ought? No question, but we often hear their own Inferences and Applications, instead of the Truth;

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and how unlike, or even contrary these are to it, depends only on their unprejudic'd Sense and Ingenuity.

Thus, from these general Heads, besides many others, we may conclude the great Uncertainty of ordinary Reports: And that on such weak Evidence, it must be a Notorious Rashness and Injustice to pronounce Sentence in so considerable a matter, as is the Reputation of our Neighbour: And there's no doubt, as often as any, on these grounds proceed to Condemnation, if a *Daniel* were present, he would reproach them, as above; *Why are you so senseless, that without examination or knowledge of the truth, you have condemn'd a Child of Israel? Return again to Judgment.* Return again, for all these Causes require a re-hearing; and without this we cannot easily avoid having a hand in our Neighbour's Blood.

Deliver me, O Lord, from this Injustice; and for as many, as I have hitherto wrong'd in this kind, I beseech thee, O God, in thy mercy abundantly to recompence the injury I have done. I pray for them now, and this satisfaction I will make them, to pray for them, as long as I live. And for the future, so strengthen me, I beseech thee, by thy Grace, that I may govern my Tongue
and

Fourth Sunday in Lent. 153

and my Ears, that I may never have any part in Defaming my Neighbour; but may ever reprove and discourage those, who practise it; for thus only can that Blood be wash'd off, in which I have so often dip'd my hands.

Fourth Sunday in Lent.

EPISTLE.

Galat. C. 4. V. 22. ends V. 31.

B *Rethren, we are not Children of the* Servant, *but of the Free-woman, by the liberty, with which Christ has made us free.* In this Epistle, S. Paul lays before us the great advantage of Christians above those of the Old Law; shewing the *Jews* to be a Carnal and Worldly People, animated with a Slavish Spirit, and figur'd by the Seed of *Agar*, *Abraham's* Servant: Whilst the Christians he proves to be the true Children of God, Heirs of Eternal Life, and bless'd with that liberty, wherewith Christ has made them free, and therefore figur'd in the Seed of *Sarah* a Free-Woman *Abraham's* Wife. This then is the Character given by S. Paul, of a true Chri-

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istian; That he is one, who enjoys a certain liberty of Spirit, by which being freed, through Christ, from all the sinful Bonds of the Flesh and the World, he is united to God, as to his Father; he loves him with the tenderness of a Child; he runs to him with the Confidence of a Child; he regards him, as his Sovereign Good; prefers him before all things; consecrates to him his whole Life; and all this, as spur'd on by the true Spirit of Christ. These are certainly very great advantages of a Christian, and a great Blessing to those Happy ones, who taste their Sweetness, and experience them within their Souls. But then, on the other side, are they not the Subject of as great terrour and confusion to all those, who discover none of these marks of true Liberty; since hence, they have too much ground to conclude, that however, in their Baptism, they have been entitled to the Freedom of the Adopted Children of God, yet they are so miserable; as to live in Slavery, and deserve no other place, than to be rank'd with the *Jews*, as being truly no other than the *Jews* of the New Law? And God knows how great the number of these are.

Amongst

Amongst these, we must certainly reckon all those, who are Slaves to any Vice or Passion, who live in habitual sin, and think so little of breaking their Chains, that they esteem themselves well as they are, and seek not heartily for such Means, by which they may hope to be set at liberty. Then, let those consider, how near they approach to this unhappy state, who having their hearts wholly possess'd with the business of this World, have their thoughts so quite swallow'd up in this Solitude and Concern, that they are not so much as touch'd with the concern of their Souls. Let those too consider it, who being eager and lively about every thing else, look coldly on every thing that belongs to God, and take but very little or no pains in such Affairs, whereon their Salvation depends. Let those again consider it, who make such an unequal distribution of their Time and Employment, as to give almost all to the World, and almost nothing to God: Who, when they are to spend one quarter of an hour in Prayer, are so uneasy, that they seem to surfeit; but when they are call'd to Creatures and their Diversions, are then in true satisfaction, and even Transports of Joy. Lastly, Let all those consider this point, who
live

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live according to the ordinary method of the World, subject to the common Failings and Passions of Men, going on in a customary track of seeming Devotion, but without a serious application to any means, by which they may gain upon themselves in the reformation of their Lives: Let these consider it, I say, and see, whether they can reckon themselves in the number of those, who are mov'd by the Spirit of Christ; and deliver'd from the Slavery of their Passions; if they can, it must be, by supposing the Spirit of Christ to abide within them Barren, without Fruit or Action, and leaving them insensible of the misery of their condition; which is indeed quite contrary to that Idea, the Scripture gives of it, and more resembles a State of Death, than the Spirit of Life.

'Tis true, it cannot be pretended, there are any in this World, enjoying that perfect liberty, so as to be exempt from that General Slavery, which belongs to all, as we are born in sin. As many as come into this World, are born, as it were in a Prison, whence there's no Delivery but by Death; as long as we are in it, we are expos'd to infinit Difficulties, continual Troubles and Necessities: We are dragg'd on every day toward Death, like Criminals carrying to
Execu-

Execution, without any power of resisting : We are subject to the Corruption of the Body, we have not our very Souls at command ; but our Spirit is very often possess'd, even against our Wills, with a thousand impious and wicked Fancies, and our Wills distracted with as many Inclinations, which we cannot prevent. This is the condition of all, as many as come into this World, whether Great or Little, Good or Bad. But then with this difference ; that the Wicked and Imperfect Christians, give up the cause, so surrender themselves and approve of this Slavery, that to them it becomes voluntary and of choice, which before was only Natural and against their Wills, and thus yield obedience to all its Laws and Directions : The Good, on the other side, confessing the Justice of this State, submit to it with Patience, as to all the Troubles and endless Contradictions of it ; but then, as far as its Inclinations and Suggestions are contrary to the Law of God, they make War against it, and are so strictly on the watch, that however it has got the possession of Nature, yet they keep their Will in their own power : So that though they find it often furiously assaulted, yet they still stand on the defensive : If by chance or surprize, they
lose

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loose ground, they still recover it again: if any breach be made, they still repair it: And thus weakning by degrees their Enemy, they enjoy a sort of Peace and Liberty; notwithstanding all the Slavery; and this is that Liberty, with which Christ has made us free.

'Tis the enlarging and perfecting this liberty, is the business of this present time of *Lent*, whilst by Fasting, Self-denials, Mortification, and using our best endeavours, we are encourag'd to lessen the Bonds of our Slavery and Corruption; and by Alms, Prayer, Reading and other Devotions to raise up our Minds to the earnest desire of Peace, and so strengthen our hearts against all attempts of our Enemies, that we may come to the Liberty of the Children of God, and by being his Children, be likewise the Heirs of his Kingdom. Grant us, O God of Power and Goodness, this Liberty at present, that we may at length obtain this Inheritance.

Munday

Munday.

Fourth VWeek in Lent.

L E S S O N.

3 Kings C. 3. V. 16. to the end.

THE other Woman said: Let it be neither mine nor thine, but divide it: Thus said the Woman disputing with her Companion, before *Salomon*, concerning the live Child: And by this *Salomon* judg'd her not to be the Mother of it. As long as we are here in this World, we feel great Struggles and Disputes within us, and variety of claims made to our Souls. Almighty God makes his demands on one side, and produces sufficient Titles, to shew we belong to him, and the claim he lays, is to all; *Fili, præbe mihi cor tuum*. Give me thy heart; Thon shalt love me with all thy Heart, with all thy Soul, with all thy Strength, and with all thy Mind. And there are some so happily assisted by his Grace, that indeed they give all to him, serving him with all their power; letting his Will be equally their Guide in all they do, and their Satisfaction in all they suffer:

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fer: The complying with their Duty is their great concern; if they meet with opposition, they resist what is evil, and submit with patience to whatever is not in their power to remedy; they use the World and Creatures, as far as Necessity obliges; but are ever watchful to avoid all those Abuses, which Vanity, Curiosity, or the love of pleasure suggests: Thus, instead of serving themselves, they with all sincerity serve God, and are ever doing the business of their Father in Heaven: 'Twas this *David* pray'd for, when he cryed out: *Fiat cor meum immaculatum*: Let my heart be pure, and wholly thine, O Lord, without mixture; that so I may never be confounded.

The Devil however, on the other side, makes his claim too; and 'tis to all; earnestly solliciting, that as many Souls as are created, would entirely renounce all Obedience to the Law of God, and submit to him. *Mitte te deorsum; Cast thy self down*; is what he says to all: And there are too many, so unfortunately miserable, as to surrender themselves, by acknowledging no ties on them, either of Religion or Conscience, but let the irregularity of their corrupt Desires be the rule of all they do: And thus they become wholly his. But however, if he cannot obtain thus far, rather than give

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give up his right, he cries out, *Divide ; Let them be divided* . If they may not be entirely mine, let them be mine in part : And thus evidently discovers, how unjust his claim is ; being still contented, so he can but take us, even this way out of his hands, who is truly our Father.

By this Artifice, he makes his greatest advantage, amongst Christians at least ; for 'tis to be hoped, they are not so very numerous, who give themselves wholly up to a reprobate sense : But as to those, who divide themselves betwixt God and the Devil, 'tis to be fear'd these are beyond all number. In this unhappy List are to be reckon'd that vast body of Christians, who retaining a sense, though very imperfect, of their Duty to God and their own Souls, say some Prayers at home every Morning, and are often present at the Publick Worship of the Church ; but then, as to the rest of the Day, give themselves that liberty, that whether it be by the practice of Swearing, Cursing, Excessive Drinking, Gaming, and variety of other Licentiousness, they never fail to shew, that the Devil has a part in them : So that if they pay their Homage daily to God by Prayer, they are as constant in making their Sacrifice to the Devil, in their

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their Vicious Extravagancies. 'Tis by this method the greatest part of Christians miscarry; for however they keep up to a Form, and seem truly to acknowledge God, in offering him every day some of their Thoughts, some of their Words, and it may some of their Actions; yet when is the day, they make not the like acknowledgment to the Devil, by yielding him obedience, in following his Suggestions, and offending God in Thoughts, Words and in Deeds? A like Division they make of their *Time*, of their *Care and Solitude*, of their *Money* and of whatever else belongs to them; God coming in sometimes for a share, and the Devil for a Greater; for if they give some Alms; let them but reckon too how much is spent on *Vanity*, *Pride*, *Excesses* and to feed their *Vices*; and 'twill soon appear on which side is the much greater proportion, or rather, that there's no proportion at all. Under this head then come in as many as live in any vicious practice: and I fear a great number of those, who seem *good moral men* and are *Just* in giving to every one their due; for however Heaven has bless'd them with a good Natural temper, and upon the Principles of their Constitution, they are generally very *Sincere*, *Friendly*, *Compassionate* and
Just:

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Just : yet in as much as there is wanting in them that more solid Foundation of the *Love of God*, hence there arises a great mixture in their Lives ; and, tho' it be not always apparent, yet with all their Goodness and Justice to their Neighbour, there is commonly some great Injustice to God and their own Souls, in some affected irregularity, by which the Devil holds his right in them.

Hence it is, many others ought to be very apprehensive of themselves, who act on better Principles, that is, not of Nature, but of Duty and Religion : For however they may advance so far in a regular and exemplar Life, as to judge themselves and be reputed, as truly belonging to God ; yet, if they unfortunately take the liberty, in any one point, to transgress their Duty ; not in any notorious or scandalous crime, but even in judging rashly or discouraging uncharitably of their Neighbour, this one Habitual sin makes an evident Division in their Souls ; and if, depending on their Religious Practices, they seem to hope, that God has a share in them ; they need not doubt, from one vicious practice, to conclude, that the Devil has his too : And then, what is the unhappy consequence of this, but that, in reality, they
belong

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belong not to God at all? For if *a little Leaven*, as *S. Paul* says, *corrupts the whole lump*; and *no Man can serve two Masters*; 'tis plain, that even one indulg'd sin, that is mortal, wholly defiles the Soul; and he that in such case pays homage to the Devil, can truly pretend to no other Master. This seems a severe Doctrine, but however, upon due consideration, I don't find, any thing can be bated of it. And therefore, 'tis what ought to set us on a very strict watch; so that, however we may be subject to many Infirmities, yet we are still to be very careful, never to give way to any one Mortal offence, especially as to render it customary; for that by this means, we are in a state of being for ever lost to our Heavenly Father, and become entirely his, who by Division, pretends only to a small part, but truly gains the whole.

Deliver us, O God, from this fatal errour, and if we have been hitherto overseen, we now beseech to have mercy on us and forgive all that is past: We here acknowledge thee to be our Father, and desire to live thy Children: And for this end here beg thy Grace, that the Devil may have no part in us: No, dear Lord, 'tis thou art our Father: And
now

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now in the Spirit of Children, we pronounce those sacred words ; *Our Father who art in Heaven* : And desire, as often as we shall repeat them, to renew our Fidelity to Thee.

Tuesday

Fourth Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Exod. C. 32. V. 7. ends V. 14.

GOD said to Moses ; *Go down from the Mount ; for thy people has Sin'd, which thou brought'st out of Egypt : they have soon forsaken the way, which thou shew'd'st them.* Pastors have a charge from God of their Flock, and this must necessarily suffer, if they are wanting in their duty. Happy are they who expose their people to no other hazard, than while they take time, like *Moses*, to converse with God, and attend to their own Spiritual affair. But then how many *W's* will follow them, if deluded by the *Spirit*, World, or of Sloth, or of Cowardise, they are prevail'd on to omit the greatest part of their duty, and thus give opportunity to their flock of
for-

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forsaking the ways of Justice? God will not say to them, *Go down, for your people have Sinned*; but in the Spirit of terror, will demand an account of all those sins, which have been the consequence of their Neglect.

But however negligent Pastors will be thus call'd to a strict account; yet will this be no excuse to the people, so as to deliver them from the deserv'd punishment justly due to their sins: and therefore it ought to be their care, still to preserve their Innocence, and to conclude no circumstances will be allow'd, as a sufficient justification, if they fall into any crime. As the condition of our nation is, 'tis impossible every one can have that assistance from their Pastor, as their circumstances might otherwise require. Some have not the opportunity of seeing one in several weeks; and hence they often want him for instruction, for direction, for a Comfort in trouble, for a Help in Sickness; Nay hence many die without him. But however, 'tis most certain, whatever sins they fall into, in this want of his assistance, they highly provoke Heaven, as we see here in this offence of the *Jews*, and a severe account will be demanded of them.

How

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How great then ought to be the diligence of all such who live in these unhappy circumstances? First in Masters of Families, to keep up a regular discipline amongst those under their charge, to see, that the duties of Sundays and Holydays be observ'd to the best of their power: and tho' they have not the opportunity of assisting personally at the publick Worship of the Church on every day of Obligation, yet never to fail in summoning their Family together on such days, so as to hear Mass in Spirit at least (as *S. Francis Sales* advises) and performing all the devotions of the Liturgy; which may be done with great benefit, especially if they take care, they be first instructed how to do it: then to meet again at a convenient hour in the Afternoon, for the saying Even-Song in private, or such other Prayers, as every one may find proper for themselves: and here it will be very well, their devotions be concluded with some one reading a Chapter in a Spiritual Book aloud to the whole company, and that this exercise of Reading afterwards in private or publick, as circumstances will permit, be earnestly recommended to them: a watchful diligence being ever us'd for the banishing from their Families all those scandalous Exercises and Diversions,

ons, with which too many prophane these days.

Then for Private persons ; how regular ought they to be in all such pious exercises, as are necessary for a Christian and Holy Life ; how careful in avoiding all sin, as much as may be, and all dangers of it ; and above all things, not to live in the custom of any vicious practice, such as renders them enemies to God, and sets them at a distance from him ! For certainly, since they have not those Helps and Remedies at hand, that may be necessary for them, it ought to be their business to secure themselves, by a more than ordinary Diligence ; and so to live, that if Death should surprise them, they might still hope in God's infinite Mercy, and not let the absence of their Pastor be the occasion of casting them into despair.

But the instruction of this days Lesson is not confin'd to people of these ill circumstances ; it belongs to others too ; for is it not generally the misfortune of most Christians, too soon to forsake the way, which God shews them ? How often happens it, that from what we Read or Hear, or from the suggestion of some Serious Thoughts, we are made truly sensible of our failings, and shewn the way we ought to Walk in ; And tho' this

be

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be follow'd with something we call a Resolution; yet such is our misery, as soon as some other affairs make these better thoughts give place, just as if Moses had turn'd his back, we presently return to our former method, and forget the way that was shewn us? The truth is, we easily approach so near our duty, as to be pleas'd with the prospect of a Virtuous life, and the Taste of Holiness, we receive from the lively impression of a good Book or discourse, is grateful to us; and hence we are willing to hope we have advanc'd something towards that perfection, Christianity recommend, to us: when God knows we are many times at a great distance from it: for though it be a very good sign to be pleas'd with the taste of what is good, as shewing the Soul to be well inclin'd; yet there's a very great difference between being pleas'd with the Thoughts of Good, and being really so; since those pleasing apprehensions are often follow'd with relapses into very great failings, with considerable Neglects, Over-sights and Rashness, which those take care to avoid, who labor to be Christians, not only when retir'd in their Closets, and in Thought, but likewise in their lives and actions.

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These reflect, that those Thoughts of Virtue, with which Almighty God often visits them, will be no advantage, except they come to have such an influence as to direct their actions, to be an effectual means of reclaiming them from all that is irregular in them, and thus bring forth fruit in their lives. For this end they are not contented with those passing thoughts of Good, which occur in time of Reading or Praying, but often strive to recall the same over again in the day, they know they must be often repeated, before they can hope for any good effect; they are sensible of the opposition Nature and ill Custom will make against them, and therefore endeavour to guard them with Diligence, Constancy and a true Christian Solitude, and use all the Means their Director recommends to them: For otherwise what will it avail to have Good Thoughts, if like the Good Seed on the high-way, they are neglected, and soon trampled under foot by whatever comes next? These can possibly bring forth no fruit; they may be pleasing, but will certainly be barren, and will no otherwise answer the ends of Christianity, than the Seed on the High-way can satisfy the expectation of the Husbandman. This neglect is a principal reason in too many

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many that their Amendment seldom goes beyond their own thoughts, because whatever promising Aprehensions they have, they only serve to shew them the way, but are too weak truly to lead them into it.

Great is our misery in this particular, and we can have no remedy for it, but from thee O God! Help us then with thy powerful Grace, in this our distress, and so strengthen us in the prosecution of all that is good, that we may not only think of Holiness, while we have our Books in our hands, but so carry on our designs, that our Resolutions may appear in our lives.

Wednesday

Fourth Week in Lent.

LESSON.

Isaiah. C. 1. V. 16. ends V. 19.

Though your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall become white as Snow, though they be red as Crimson, they shall be made white as Wooll. We being so far advanc'd in Lent, 'tis very reasonable, we should

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now enter upon a review of our selves, and see whether we are so careful in the observance of it, as to hope for that good effect, the Church proposes to all such as keep it as they ought, The end we are to aim at, in the due observance of this Holy time, is the same God promises in this Days Lesson, to wit, the entire pardon of all our sins, so that however grievous they may have been, though as red as Scarlet, yet now we are to hope to become pure and undefil'd, and be made white as Snow. Is this the way we are in? Do we make such use of this time, as to have reason to hope for this good effect in our Souls? 'Tis this we ought to enquire into at present, that so, we may not, like the *Jews*, observe this Solemn Fast in vain. For our direction in this point, Almighty God has here laid down two Conditions, absolutely necessary for the rendering our Fasts effectual; and without which, he declares, they will be wholly fruitless and barren. *Quiescite agere perverse; Discite benefacere.* He includes them in these few words: *Cease from doing evil; Learn to do Good.* 'Tis on these Terms, he promises, *Though our Sins be red as Crimson, they shall be made white as Wooll,*

What

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What then, though we see many Fasters; what tho' we see many frequenting the Sacraments? Do all these obtain the Promises? No; no more of them, than perform the Conditions. Such as go on with Fasting, and carry on their sins too, cannot expect the Promises made to those, who *cease from doing evil*. The Promise is conditional, and is truly nothing to them, who are not solicitous to perform what is requir'd. Here then is the great matter of surprise, that while Pardon of our sins is only offer'd us on these terms, we pretend to labour and hope for it in this Holy time, and yet so go on after the old way, that we shew our keeping of *Lent*, only on our Tables, in the distinction of our Diet; and not in the more than ordinary regularity of our Lives. It were to be wish'd, we could make this time more remarkable for the change of our selves, than for the alteration of our Diet; and that it might be observable in us, tho' our Tables were never seen. I would not have our Adversaries be put to enquire, Why we eat no Flesh: But rather; Why this Mando's not Swear as usual? Why this other Drinks not to Excess, as usual? Why this declines Gaming, or other dangerous Company and Entertainments? Why this has cut off

so much of his Expensive Vanity? Why this is not so Passionate or Quarrellsome, as ordinary? Why these discourse not so freely of their Neighbour, as usual? Why these throw not away their Money with their accustom'd Prodigality? Thus ought we all make such Retrenchments, at this time, in all those Disorders we observe in our selves, so as to give sufficient grounds of Wonder to as many as know us, and evidently convince them of it being *Lent*; without consulting our Tables, but only by the change of our Lives. 'Tis on these Conditions, we may hope for a good effect of our Fasting, and by *ceasing to do evil*, expect that Mercy God has promis'd.

But however, we are still to take one step farther, and not only cease to do evil, but *learn to do good*; And the good here expressly mention'd, is in regard of our Neighbour; To love Justice, to succour the Oppressed, to be just to the Orphan, to defend the Widow. Our daily Failings and common Miscarriages of our Soul, are generally in regard of our Neighbour; and if we seriously think of making our Peace with God, it must be, by giving evident proof of our amendment in those very particulars, where we acknowledge our sins have been:

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been: And therefore, there being nothing but Charity, that can satisfy for that want of Charity, we have hitherto had, it ought to be our present business, to labour for an eminent degree of this. Now 'tis most evident, this Charity or Love of our Neighbour, is not an idle or unactive Virtue, which can lie still in our Soul, but if it be there, it certainly puts it upon action, and on all occasions ever moves the Will, to procure our Neighbour's good, and carefully avoid whatever may do him any kind of prejudice; so that if ever the cause of our injur'd Neighbour, of the Orphan or Widow, be brought before us, it obliges us to be their Advocates, and espouse their interest. And though Christians may protest within themselves, they would certainly do so, if ever it were in their power to do them this right, I say, they have this often in their power: For as often as they have the cause of any *Absent* before them, whose reputation is either question'd or condemn'd, so often have they the Cause of the *Orphan* and *Widow*; the *Absent* being like them, truly in distress: And if they then joyn with the Company, in laying more weight on the Oppressed, and by their concurring Votes, help to ruine their cause, they

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then take part with the Multitude, without regard to *Justice*, and most certainly act against *Charity*, which as *S. Paul* says, *thinks no evil*, much less *speaks no evil* of any. And this, whatever the Ingratitude or Wickedness of Men may be; for since their state is not yet unchangeable, but they are still capable of becoming the Children of God; since they have the Church and Sacraments open to them; since they have the Bowels of God's infinit Mercy ready to receive them; what pretext can we have to exclude them from our Charity, and not rather express towards them the greatest tenderness possible, as being Objects, that truly deserve the greatest compassion? And therefore whenever we go about, upon the pretext of their Malice, or Ingratitude, to think our selves under no obligation of shewing any Charity to them; I cannot but fear, at the same time, we find Arguments to exclude our selves from the Mercy of God; since our Ingratitude and Wickedness in regard of him, surpasses all that elsewhere can possibly be imagin'd. If then our Charity reaches not beyond desert, with what face of confidence can we pretend to ask or expect it from Almighty God?

Let

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Let us therefore, in consideration of our own interest, extend our Charity to all: Let us thus endeavour to do the Good, God requires of us, that so, by fulfilling the Conditions, our Fasts may be acceptable, and we obtain that pardon, we so much stand in need of. And thou, O God of infinit Charity, help us in this our Duty; for though it be compris'd in a few words, of *ceasing to do Evil, and learning to do good*; yet it is a great work, and we confess, of our selves, we shall certainly fail in the performance: Pour forth therefore, we beseech thee, thy Grace into our Souls, and enable us to fulfil all thy Commands, and then, Lord, command what thou wilt.

Thursday

Thursday.

Fourth Week in Lent.

LESSON.

4 Kings C. 4. V. 25. ends V. 38.

Elisha said to his Servant : Take my Staff and go : If thou meet'st any one, salute him not ; and if any one salutes thee, answer him not ; and put my Staff on the Child's Face. This was the Command of the Prophet to his Servant, when he sent him, to raise the Shunamite's Son to Life. This same is the business, we generally have on our hands, to give Life to our Souls, and deliver them from that Death, which sin brings on us ; and, not to miscarry in this work, we cannot do better, than carefully observe the Prophet's Directions. There are great numbers, who touch'd with the Light of God's Grace, have a clear sight of that darkness, in which they lie ; and, as Men inspir'd, seem resolv'd to rescue themselves from that Slavery and Death which oppresses them ; when not regarding the Prophet's Prescriptions, they

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they salute those they meet, and intending nothing more, than to be Civil to their Old Acquaintance, are by them discourag'd from their pious undertaking, and even laugh'd into their former Engagements of sin. One would think, *to be Civil*, is a qualification not at all unbecoming a Christian; and yet the greatest part of the World is so corrupt, and those Customs now receiv'd and practis'd even by persons of Reputation, have so much of Danger, if not of Evil, mix'd with them, or at least entail'd on them, that whoever is resolute in following the Maxims and Rules of the Gospel, is under an obligation of being Rude, and must necessarily break receiv'd Practices in so many Occurrences, that he cannot well escape the censure of being Uncivil.

See but the ways of the World: There is so much of downright Vice and Wickedness in the ordinary course of great numbers call'd Christians, that 'tis plain, their Friendship is an enemy to God; and whoever salutes these, so as to comply with them, and be civil, as they term it, must necessarily shake hands with the Commandments, with Conscience and the Practice of Religion.

And

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And for such, as are some degrees before these, I mean that considerable number of Catholicks, who pretend to Religion, who observe some order as to their Prayers and Devotion, and seem to renounce whatever is evidently sinful and scandalous ; I say, as to these, *Salute them not* : For they have so widen'd the narrow way, and made the Life of a Christian, to be a Life of so much Divertisement, of so much Liberty, of Vanity, of Curiosity, of Prodigality ; that the Gospel-Spirit is quite out of fashion with them, and they know not what Self-denial, what Mortification, what taking up the Cross, what forsaking the World, or the true Spirit of Penance is: And if in thy way of recovering thy Soul from sin, thou happen'st to salute and strike in with these, thou art in evident danger of never coming to that life thou seekest ; thou wilt be drawn in to a Life of ease ; and if thou engagest not in open sin, thou wilt at least be in love with the occasions of it, be fond of what is dangerous, and be contented to live on the brink of a Precipice, but certainly at a great distance from that way, which the Gospel shews and recommends, the way that leads to Life.

Look

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Look still again to others, who are in another rank before these, who are more cautious and reserv'd, who have cut off most of the Extravagancies of Youth, and are exemplar among their Neighbours : And yet if thou meetest these, *Salute them not*, nor think all that to be Holy, or even allowable, which thou behold'st in them ; for even these have corrupted their ways ; they take so much liberty in their Discouraging, are so easie in making their Passions reasonable and just, are so free in Judging, so little concern'd in their unnecessary Expences both of Time and Money, are so indecently hasty in their Devotions, so remiss in their Fasting, so little recollected and prepar'd in frequenting the Sacraments, with variety of such other Failings, that if thou joynest with these, thou art in danger of being stop'd in thy way ; thou must pass them by, and not let the authority of reputed Good People, prevail with thee, to think thy self safe and well in every thing thou seest practis'd by them. Whilst then thou art upon the Prophets Message, in seeking Life for thy Soul, follow the Prophet's directions ; if thou meetest any, *Salute them not ; and if any salute thee, answer them not.*

But

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But what! Are Christians then so deprav'd; that there are none fit for a poor Penitent to joyn with, in his way to Life? Truly 'tis no rashness to conclude, the Lives of most Christians to be very imperfect and corrupt: And he that has told me, *There are many Call'd, but few Chosen*; assures me, there are but few qualified for this; and who these few are, God only knows. They are therefore certainly in great danger of being misled, who rest satisfied under a quiet mind, for as much as there is nothing they do, but they have the Example of other very Sober and Pious Christians, to authorize and justifie what they do. These say for themselves, *Such an one does this; such another does that*, who are Persons of Principles and Conscience: And this would be a good defence, could they add too; *That they are certain, these Persons never do any thing amiss*. But alas; it being most certain, that these very Persons do many things, of which they afterwards repent, and for which they reprove themselves; it must necessarily be unsafe to follow them; and their Authority may be the means of leading others into many imperfections: And I don't question, 'tis on these grounds of *Example and Custom*, numbers of undiscern-

Thursday 4th Week in Lent. 183

discerning Souls are carried out of the way.

What then are Christians to do, who desire to avoid this ill conduct? They must take the Prophet's Staff in their hands, that is, take the advice of some discreet Director, and having learn'd from him the Safe and Narrow Way, and inform'd themselves from Scripture and other good Books, what the Spirit of Christ is, what true Penance is; how dangerous is a Life of Idleness and Ease, how many dangerous Practices are authoris'd by Example and Custom, &c. then be careful to walk on by the help of this Staff, and to salute none by the way, so as to be perswaded by their Authority to decline either to the right or to the left; and thus shall they find life for their Souls Help us, O Lord, in this our way, and so strengthen our Hearts by thy Grace, that no power or perswasion, may ever carry us out of the path of thy Commandments, or prevail on us to embrace any thing that is not safe for our Souls and most agreeable to thy Holy Spirit. *Amen.*

Friday

Friday.

Fourth Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

3. King. C. 17. V. 17. to the end.

THE womans Son being dead, *She said to Elias : What have I to do with thee, thou man of God ! Art thou come to me, to call my Sins to remembrance, and kill my Son ?* The occasion of this Complaint, was not that this woman repented of the Charity she had shewn to the Prophet, in entertaining and feeding him : but she began to fear, she had not treated this Servant of God with that respect as she ought, and that this her unworthiness had provoked Almighty God to punish her former Sins in the death of her Son : So that they are words not of an angry but an Humble mind, And though she was mistaken in this her construction ; since her Child was not taken away to punish her, but that God might be glorified in his Prophet, by restoring him to life ; Yet this her apprehension is an instruction to us, how careful we ought to be, in treating Holy things holily and with

Friday fourth Week in Lent. 185

with great respect, and that the want of this, is a ready means of drawing God's Judgments on our Heads.

We that are Christians, have the treasure of God's infinit Mercies pour'd forth upon us; we are, above all others, encompass'd on every side with Blessings: And as the being thus priviledg'd with the extraordinary effects of the Divine Goodness, exacts from us the greatest Tribute of Thanksgiving, Adoration and Praise; so, there's no Question, there's nothing more exaggerates the sins of Christians, and renders them more provoking, than an insensibility, Ingratitude and want of Respect under these wonderful Favours of the Divine Bounty: And if at any time they experience the weight of God's Anger on them, they need not look for any farther reason. And hence it is, I cannot but fear, that however we have infinit Helps appointed us by Almighty God, the abuse of these very Helps will be the condemnation of great numbers of Christians.

'Tis a great Blessing God has ordain'd for our good in the Sacrifice of the Altar, whereby he has provided us a Means of obtaining all necessary Graces, by laying before the Father the infinit Merits of his Son's Passion. Now
here

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here being offer'd the Lamb of God himself, that is, he that is all Holiness, Purity and Perfection; how great Holiness and sense of Respect does it require on our parts, to partake of the intended Blessings: And how easily may a want of that Holiness and Respect so justly due, turn all those Blessings into Curses, and make that be our ruine, through our faults, which by the Divine Goodness was design'd for our Salvation? How careful then ought all those be, who are call'd to the Altar, to let a becoming Gravity, a profound Reverence, a true, sincere Devotion accompany all they do, and never to let Custom diminish in them the sense of their Obligation? If it be Holy what they do every day, it ought every day to be done holily: Nay every day more holily than other, since every day is the addition of a new favour: And if it be Christ himself they offer every day, it ought still to be perform'd with a Humility, with a Respect due to so Divine a Function. And if this be wanting; if instead of Gravity, there be an indecent Hurry; if instead of Reverence, there be a want of sense; if instead of Devotion, there be the careless way of performing a Task; I can't tell, how favourably such may make up their own accounts, but I apprehend

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apprehend this to be very highly provoking to him, who knows the true value of his own Blessings, and rigorously exacts from us a return of a lasting Sense, Gratitude and Devotion, suitable and proportion'd to them.

A like construction is to be made of them, whose part it is to assist at this Great Oblation: for he that requir'd of *Moses* to pull off his shoes, because the ground, whereon he stood, was Holy, has sufficiently signified to us, that our Respect and Devotion ought ever to be answerable to the Sanctity of the Place or Person, in whose presence we are; and therefore, though many come to this Sacrifice of Christ's infinit love, and are present before the Lamb, but with minds wholly distracted, without a sense of what they are doing, with an indecent behavior either in gazing or talking, with hearts full of Vanity, or any ways encouraging or engag'd in sin; may falsely perswade themselves, they are acceptably discharging a Duty; yet I think, they have more reason to fear the dreadful effects of God's anger, who thus presume to approach the Holy of Holys with Polluted, or at least unprepared and worldly Souls: for certainly, he that requires a great Sanctity on our parts, for the worthily receiving
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188 *Friday fourth week in Lent.*

all his Blessings, must necessarily be exasperated with our Neglect and Ingratitude, when being invited, as his Children and Christians, to the most Excellent of all his Mercys, we come indeed, but with the insensibility of Statues, with the levity of Worldlings, or Wickedness of Devils. And if this can be so colour'd, as to be esteemed the Performing what is due, then I think the Spirit of Christianity is lost, and there's nothing left, but the outward Frame of a Useless Carcass. This would be indeed a favourable addition to our own libertys, but a great lessening to the Sanctity and Majesty of our God: but such, I hope, as will not enter into the hearts of many Christians; who, upon reflection, must needs conclude, that God's severe chastisements of the Jews, heretofore for their disrespect to the Ark, are a demonstration of the great Reverence and Sanctity, with which we are oblig'd to perform every duty that belongs to him, and that otherwise we must unavoidably fall like them, under the rigor of his Justice.

Upon which consideration, I could wish, as often as Christians approach before their God to pay him homage, for Solemnizing any Festival, or partaking
of

Friday fourth Week in Lent. 189

of any of the Sacraments, they would ever remember to prepare themselves with those interior dispositions of Soul, as many render them true Honorers of their Lord, fit them for those Graces he has design'd in all his Holy Institutions, and by this means escape those Judgments, which follow all those, who unworthily appear before him. For certainly, as Old *Simeon* prophesied of Christ, that he was come for the *Ruin and Resurrection of many*; so it is with every thing that belongs to Christ: They are not *things indifferent*, which can be without having any effect: no they must either help us or hurt us, either save us or condemn us. If we perform them, as we ought, we shall receive a Blessing; but if we are wanting on our parts, this involves so great an abuse of God's Mercys, so great an Ingratitude, that it must necessarily bring to Gods remembrance all our sins, and move him to a just revenge.

Quicken us then, O Lord, with thy holy Spirit, that we may perform every thing that belongs to Thee, with a Respect and Devotion truly becoming thee; that we may not, by our Insensibility, or impiety unhappily draw poison to our Souls in the abuse of thy Blessings; but serve thee in Spirit and Truth,
and

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and thus receive the advantage of all thy Mercys.

Saturday

Fourth Week in Lent.

L E S S O N.

Isaiah C. 49. V. 8. ends V. 15.

S*ay to those, who are in chains; Go forth: and to such as are in darkness; See the light.* This whole lesson is a Prophecy of Christ; foretelling, that he should reconcile the world to God, gather those that were scatter'd, be the Guide of his people, deliver those in chains, and bring light to such as are in darkness. And indeed so wonderful have been the provisions of his Mercy, that there has been nothing wanting in him for the filling up all those Characters given him heretofore by the Prophets: and yet, behold, notwithstanding all this, what great numbers of Christians are there still lying under the oppression of heavy chains, still sitting in the shades of Darkness, as if Christ had taken no care, or done nothing for them? And yet is it not evident, on the other side, that all

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all the Means of our Redemption are General, and whatever he has done or suffer'd for our deliverance from Death and Darkneſs, has been in common for all? The miſfortune then of all thoſe, who are not ſenſible of any effects of his Paſſion, muſt be charg'd on themſelves, and not on him; inasmuch as, he having accompliſh'd all on his part, neceſſary for their Salvation, they are wholly wanting in what he requires of them. He ſays to them; *Go forth of your Chains*, and they obey him not: He ſays to them; *See the light*; and they hear not his voice. They vainly imagine, that after his Sufferings, they are to be Sav'd *gratis*, or with out any trouble or pains on their ſide; whereas his Paſſion, however neceſſary to Satisfy the Divine Juſtice, was not at all intended to exempt or excuſe us, but rather to ſerve us as an Example and Rule, how we ought ever to labor and ſuffer for the purchaſe of Happineſs, as his Diſciples and Followers. *Chriſt ſuffer'd for us*, ſays S. Peter, *leaving us an Example. that we may follow his ſteps*. The life of a Chriſtian, then ought to be like that of Chriſt, laborious and painful; *ſi tamen compatimur, ut & conglorificemur*; and there can be no reaſonable hopes of Glory, after a life, which
has

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has not follow'd upon the steps of his Sufferings.

For as many then as live at their ease, waiting on the Inclinations of a corrupt nature, and the great business of whose lives, is to satisfy themselves in whatever delights, and not to punish themselves in those Self-denials, which are indispensably necessary for a Christian conquest; nor take that pains in those exercises of Praying, Reading &c. which are the proper means of knowing what Virtue is and improving in it: as for these, I say, what wonder is it if they still lie under the weight of sin, and enslav'd to many Passions; since Christ commanding them, to *Go forth of their chains*, they take no pains to shake them off; and bidding them *See*, they will not turn themselves to the light? These may complain indeed of human Weakness, but the true grounds of their Misery, is their Sloth, their Self-love, their fear of hurting themselves, and not being acquainted with that Gospel Principle, of denyiny their Sense and Passion those satisfactions, which are contrary to the Spirit of Christ: and hence living according to the Method of Unbelievers and Heathens, how should they expect the fruits of Christ's Passion in their Souls, who know nothing of his Spirit, obey not his voice, nor understand his ways?

A like

Saturday 4th Week in Lent. 193

A like construction is to be made of those half paced Christians, who being free from the more scandalous crimes, are however subject to many considerable weakneses, and to such imperfections, which easily discover, they have yet Chains on them, and partake not of the liberty, which Christ promis'd to his Followers: and the reason is still the same with those before: For if these look but seriously into themselves, they'll soon see very great defects on their part; that either through Sloth they will not take the pains necessary for the mastering their failings, or for want of Self-denials, give opportunity to their Passions to grow upon them: so that as far as they are off from that Perfection, which Christ promises; so far they may generally conclude themselves to be wanting in using those Means, which Christ requires of them.

Generally, I say; for I cannot but hope, there are some Christians, and those not few, who keeping a due watch on themselves, carefully make use of all those Means, which they are advis'd to be proper for them; and notwithstanding this Diligence, are still sensible of many Weakneses, which makes them apprehend God to be angry with them, while he seems not to give a blessing to their

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194 *Saturday 4th Week in Lent.*

endeavours ; and therefore, with Sion, in this Lesson, they are often ready to cry out : *Our Lord has forsaken us* : whereas in reality, he forsakes them not, but even, while he seems to deny them, even then is nearest to them and gives them the greatest blessings. 'Tis true, he favours them not in their own way, nor shews himself on that side, which they desire : These oftentimes led along by Inclination, though without any suspicion of its being so, are very solicitous to obtain the gift of Prayer, and earnestly desire to raise up their hearts to him in great fervour and an undisturb'd devotion : they would again, serve him in quiet and peace, free from all uneasie Temptations, which often terrifie their Souls, and almost cast them into dejection and darkness. And though they pray and labour earnestly to gain this point ; Yet 'tis without gaining ground, nay often with the fear of loosing it. But however Almighty God fails not to assist them still, and ever draws them nearer to himself ; not leading them, as they desire, by the way of *Prayer* and a *Peaceable Devotion* ; but carrying them on by a quite different, though much safer way ; that is by the way of *Patience*, of *Self-denials*, of *Suffering* and *resisting evil*, by *Longanimity*, *Humility* and *Perseverance*.

Saturday 4th. VWeek in Lent. 195

severance, So that though they pray not, with that quiet and fervour, as desir'd; nor are so free from Imperfections and evils as they wish; yet while they *Humble* themselves under the seeming withdrawings of Grace, and hold out with *Patience* and *Courage*, under all the malicious buffets of Satan, this *Humility*, this *Patience* and *Constancy* is more acceptable and advantageous to them, than all their Prayer and Peace would be: they being by this means preserv'd from all danger of interior Pride, Presumption and Opinion of themselves, which probably they might fall into, did they but advance a little in their own way; hence in that very point, wherein they bewail themselves, as not favor'd by the blessing of Heaven, they experience the effect of God's particular mercy: and when they are tempted to cry out; *Our Lord has forgot me*. Then it is, our Lord makes answer; *Can a Mother forget the Child of her Womb, so as not to have compassion on him? And if she should; Yet will I not forget thee*.

This is thy Goodness, O Lord, to poor man, to be then heaping thy Blessings on him, when, not discerning the secret of thy ways, he apprehends thee to be at a distance from him: Grant me, I beseech thee, an Humble and resigned

heart, that with perfect content I may ever acquiesce in all the methods of thy Grace : and be so favourable to me, that since thou hast so abundantly provided for my Salvation, I may be so quicken'd by thy Holy Spirit, as not to frustrate the designs of thy Mercy, by my Tepidity, Self-love or Sloth. *Amen.*

Passion Sunday.

E P I S T L E.

Heb. C. 9. V. 11. ends V. 15.

Chrisť being come, the High Priest of Goods to come, has entred once into the Sanctuary, not by the blood of Goats or Calves, but by his own Blood, having obtain'd an eternal redemption for us. Having made some preparation in our Souls, in the observance of these four weeks of Lent, by Fasting and Prayer : Now from this day, the Church requires all her Children to turn their thoughts to the Passion of our Lord ; that so, with the assurance of Christian Hope, they may look for the happy fruits of their labours, in being admitted to partake of the merits of his Sufferings ; for this ought to be the end of their endeavours,

deavours, in whatever Exercises they perform of Mortification or Prayer. And to prevent all manner of miscarriage in this important affair, she lays before them, in this Epistle the method, by which Christ enter'd into the Sanctuary of Heaven, not by the blood of Calves, but by his own blood; to instruct them; that if they effectually think of receiving the benefit of his Passion, and one day entering into his joyful Sanctuary, it must be by joyning in his Sufferings; and so far following his example, as to offer themselves a Sacrifice to God and open a way by giving their lives and blood to him.

'Tis true, as we were defil'd with Sin, we were incapable of becoming such a Sacrifice, because every Victim offer'd to God ought to be pure and without blemish: but however, this is now become possible to us through Jesus Christ, who offering his life a Sacrifice of Expiation in our behalf, has even render'd us capable of making an Offering likewise of ours, by uniting it to his. The infinit Sanctity of his Victim makes ours acceptable in the sight of God: so that, instead of exempting us from Suffering, by the effusion of his blood, he has rather by that found an expedient to Sanctify our Sufferings and render them

agreeable to the Majesty and Goodness of God.

Not that all Christians are call'd to give up their lives, as Martyrs, or in testimony of the Truth, to shed their blood: but that all are oblig'd to offer their lives a Sacrifice, through Jesus Christ, and intirely to leave it in the hands of God, as to the *Time* and *Manner*, in which he will please to accept it. 'Tis plain, the *Time* he has design'd for finishing this Offering, is that, when the hour of Death comes, whether it be Natural or Violent, whether by a tedious and painful distemper, or otherwise; but in whatever Manner it is to be, it is our general duty to offer it as a Sacrifice to him, in union with the Death of Christ. And hence it is a very commendable practice of Christians, when they assist at the Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ at the Altar, at the same time to offer their lives to God, for the time when ever he shall demand them, and in the manner he shall appoint; and beg Grace, that then they may effectually do this, when he shall put them in the necessity of doing it. By this means all the Members of Christ shall be conform'd to their Head, and not enter into Heaven, but as he did, by their blood; that is, by Offering their lives,

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a Sacrifice to God, in union with his.

But to do this well, they must prepare before-hand to give their lives, by endeavouring every day to live to him, that is, so to make God the Principal object of their heart and love, as to admit of nothing, whether of Pleasure or Profit, to have preference to him; but to be ever ready to renounce and loose all, even Life it self, rather than loose Him. And in this sense, every Christian is oblig'd to Martyrdom, in as much as every Christian ought to be prepar'd in heart, to hazard the loss of All, rather than of God; and it being in this sense that Christ says; He that loses his Life shall save it; 'tis evident no Members of Christ can enter into Heaven, but by Martyrdom and their Blood.

Now the practice of this is often put into our hands; for the Law of Christ being directly opposit to all the Inclinations of our Corrupt Nature, there's scarce any thing suggested to us to satisfy or please our selves, but what ought or may at least be renounc'd for him. How many things are we inclin'd to, which are directly Sinful? How many more are there, which though not barely criminal, are yet so very dangerous and prejudicial in their consequences, so

much indisposing our hearts, distracting our thoughts, dissipating our minds, favouring our Passions, strengthening our ill Affections, and so unsuiting us for the love of God taking possession of our Souls; that 'tis very hard reconciling them with the Service of God and our Duty? So many there are of these together, whether truly Evil, or disposing to it, or at least, Impediments to Virtue, that when I consider them in relation to Christ, methinks, I see that verified in him, which God foretold of Ismael: *His hand shall be against all; and the hands of all against him*: and I don't wonder at Simeon's Prophecy, wherein he says; Christ was set up, as it were a Mark which should be Contradicted. For since he came not only to evacuate the Law, but likewise to make war against, contradict and overcome all the Passions and evil Inclinations of our Corrupt nature, 'tis no matter of surprize to find him Contradicted, who comes to overthrow whatever is Perverse, Strong and Violent within us. But hence it is, we have ever occasions of Giving our lives a Sacrifice to him: there being not any one Inclination of all these, whether Sinful, disposing to it, or even Indifferent, but as often as in denial of our selves, we resist them, so often we give so much of our

our lives to him. And, Christians, how often ought this to be, who have generally our Thoughts, Desires, and Satisfaction so strongly bias'd on the wrong side, that they are ever running out of the way! The Occasions of this kind, are so very frequent, that there can be no true Servant of God, who makes it not his business to stand against them: there can be no Disciple of Christ, who forsakes them not; and consequently no entering into Heaven, but for such, who by a kind of Martyrdom, give up their lives to Christ: Grant us, O God, this interior strength, that we be ever ready to forsake our selves and all for Thee; that we may give our lives a Sacrifice to thy Name: for though of our selves we be unworthy, yet we have a confidence, that whatever we Offer, through the Merits and Passion of thy Only Son, will find acceptance with thee.

Munday

Munday.

Passion Week.

LESSON.

Jonah. C. 3. to the end.

THE People of Niniveh believ'd God, and proclaim'd a Fast, and put on Sackcloth from the greatest to the least. The Prophet having publish'd the Will of God, that within forty days their City should be destroy'd: you hear what immediately follows; *The people believ'd God proclaim'd a Fast and put on Sackcloth.* 'twas the effect of their Belief, that they began, in the Spirit of Humility, to punish themselves for those Sins, by which they had provok'd God's anger; hoping that by joyning this Penance to their Repentance, they might prevail on Heaven, to reverse the Sentence pronounc'd against them, and obtain pardon of their Sins. 'Tis plain our Sins cry to Heaven for vengeance, as loud as theirs: ~~say~~, are much more provoking; since such great numbers living under the Profession of Christianity, but with
all

all the vices of Heathens, must needs be more highly exasperating to the Divine Goodness, by their intolerable Ingratitude and contempt of his Mercies. The Sentence likewise pronounc'd against us, is as positive, as that against *Niniveh*; for Truth himself has said, That *except you do Penance, you shall all likewise perish.* 'Tis as evident then as Demonstration, that Our Sins being great, and God having threatn'd us with eternal destruction, if we do not Penance; as many, as believe God as they ought, seriously apply themselves, with the *Ninivites*, to the turning from their evil ways, and doing Penance for their Sins: and that such as enter not upon this method, truly believe not God, and shall have the Men of *Niniveh* rise in Judgment against them, who did Penance upon the Preaching of *Jonah*, whilst these, upon the Preaching of the Son of God, hold on still perverse and obstinate in all their evil ways: for truly one great reason of this obstinacy must be, because they *believe not God*: for 'tis impossible to conceive, that we, who are such lovers of our selves, who are so apprehensive of every thing, that is like to hurt us, who are so very impatient in all sufferings, and, being in pain, are willing to part with any thing for the purchase

chase of Ease ; 'tis impossible, I say, to conceive, that we , who are thus nicely temper'd, should for trifles and passing Satisfactions , cast our selves into eternal Torments, make choice of dwelling with devouring Fire , without hopes of Ease or possibility of Relief ; and therefore, that as many as take this destructive method , must certainly have a want of Faith at the bottom, have incredulity and blindness mixt with all their wickedness, and tho' they are reputed Christians, yet in reallity believe not God. If we believe a Precipice to be before us, we certainly retire ; if we know a House to be falling, there's no flattering Satisfaction can keep us in it : if we see a Place infected, our care is to avoid it : in this manner Reason effectually works upon us , to preserve our selves ; and whoever do's otherwise, we thence conclude, that such an one either had no Reason, or no Information of the evil. In this same manner works Faith in order to the avoiding Eternal Evils, which she shews all those to be evidently running into, who live in the practice of a vicious Life, and known breach of God's Commandments ; and for such as, upon her Information , avoid them not, it must be concluded , They have not Faith.

But,

But, as for such, who have a firm and stedfast Belief of God, their method is certainly quite different: for they no sooner reflect on his dreadful Judgments, and consider that eternal ruin, the unavoidable portion of unrepenting Sinners, but presently they look into the State of their own Souls, and if they find them to be so defil'd with Sin, or engag'd in any such vicious Practices, as necessarily render them displeasing to God, and expose them to all that Severity pronounc'd against Sinners, they hence, like the *Ninivites*, effectually forsake their evil ways, that they may escape his Judgments; and seriously endeavour, by some voluntary Chastisements to punish their past Crimes, that so they may turn away his anger from them. They forsake their evil ways, as absolutely necessary for a Sincere Repentance: They punish Sin in themselves, as an act of Justice, acceptable to God, due to their Offences, and very powerful in order to preserve themselves from all danger of relapses. This Justice is what the Scripture not only recommends, but even seems to require, where in so many places, from the mouths of *St. John Baptist*, of *Christ* our Lord, of his *Apostles S. Peter* and *S. Paul*, we have so often repeated the

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the Command of *Doing Penance*, or *bringing forth fruits worthy of Penance*. And our Redeemer expresses it more particularly *Mat. 11. 21.* where speaking of the repentance of *Tyre* and *Sidon*; he says, *They would have done Penance in Sackcloth and Ashes*; and in commending this, shews, that True Repentance not only changes the Heart, but likewise punishes the Sin, and humbles the Penitent in detestation and just Revenge of his past Pride and Rebellion. In consequence of this Doctrine, the Primitive Church ever exacted this from Repenting Sinners, enjoyning them very severe Penances, in punishment of their Transgressions; and likewise by this Severity designing to imprint in them the greater horror of Sin, and make them more fearful of returning to their Vomit. And tho' the discipline of the Church be, at present, as to these, less rigorous; yet it still owns, that every Sin is as highly provoking, and deserves as great punishment now at this time, as in those former Ages: And if Christians are not now so severe in punishing it, 'tis because they are less zealous in prosecuting the Enemies of God, and more remiss in that love they owe him; and there's too great reason to fear, that from this remissness in joyning with the

Divine

Divine Justice, in chastising themselves, they think too favourably of Sin, become less sensible of its grievousness, and more easy in falling into it.

For as many then, as lie under the guilt of Sin, and have reason to apprehend the rigour of God's Justice, they have here laid before them the method of Christ, of his Apostles and his Church. These all call upon them to do Penance, and encourage them to undertake the punishing their own Crimes. And because all Christians are so unhappily, tho' not equally, miserable, as to stand in need of this; therefore has the Church enjoyn'd Common Penalties to be undergone by all; such are every day of Abstinence, every Fast-Day, and most especially this time of *Lent*. And tho' this design of the Church be too generally abus'd, whilst most people, either by their Kitchen-contrivance, or by the liberty they take, find a way of passing over these times of Penance at their ease, without any punishment at all: yet good Christians endeavour to turn them all to the best account, make them all days of Penance, and hope by this means to obtain mercy of their God. Thus then let us do, and if we have lost any time, let us lay hold of the present: 'Tis Passion week, a time, which

which obliges to suffering: Let us then, with the *Ninivites*, enter into the true Spirit of Penance: let us forsake our Sins, but chastise them too, and we need not doubt but God will turn from his anger, and forgive us.

Tuesday

Passion Week:

LESSON.

Dan. C. 14. V. 29. to the end.

THE Babylonians said to the King: Deliver Daniel into our hands, who has destroy'd Bel and kill'd the Dragon. Daniel was a man of Example, who being a Captive and Courtier to the King of Babylon, ador'd no other but the True God in the midst of an Idolatrous Court, took no part with the impiety of his Prince, with courage ever inform'd him of the truth, expos'd the wickedness of those about him, and was not afraid to suffer for him. 'Tis this ought to be the method of as many as live, not only in a Vicious Court, but even amidst the Corruptions of a wicked world: There is a necessity of great Constancy, not to be seduced by evil Company

Company. Many a Christian has Courage of enough not only to dislike, but to resist Wickedness, when it comes alone; but when 'tis back'd with Example and Authority, especially of such as they value or depend on, then it has a more prevailing power, - and like a Torrent, carries them down with the stream. I cannot but heartily lament the misfortune of great numbers in this point, who being Persons of good Principles, would be exemplary and Virtuous, had they but Constancy and Firmness of mind proportion'd to their sincerity; but for want of this, sink much below their own designs, whilst, thro' a weakness of spirit, they act in compliance with others, and not according to that light, God has communicated to them for their own conduct.

There's no Christian can be esteem'd Good, who by this easy and irresolute temper, is perswaded to partake in any Crime: because such as these, however well inclin'd of themselves, are over-power'd by the Ministers of Satan, and by their artifice, drawn in to joyn with them in their wicked and rebellious Practices against their sovereign Lord of Heaven, to whom they had promis'd true Allegiance and Fidelity. And yet God knows, how many are thus, miserably

rably deluded into all manner of vice, to the ruin of their souls, and yet endeavor to lessen their guilt, upon reflecting, it was not their choice, but a Compliance: as if complying with Evil, were not a real and deliberate Choice, and sufficient to make them Enemys to God. Therefore Good Christians will never yield to such destructive flatteries, but think themselves oblig'd to resist even to the shedding of their blood.

But however, there are still other particulars, in which, even many of those, who pass under the character of being Exemplar, Regular and Good, are likewise too Easy, and under the notion of things being but inconsiderable, joyn with others in their practice, to the great prejudice of Christian Discipline and injury both of their own Souls and others. Hence it comes, that in Drinking, Gaming, Liberty of Talking, Freedom of Conversation, exceeding on Fasting days, Mispending Sundays, and especially in that common practice of Reflecting, Biting and Uncharitable Discourses, many Christians are so easy in taking part, as occasions present themselves, that truly I cannot but fear, whatever their repute be amongst Men, that they very considerably loose ground before Almighty God, and may thus easily

fly come at length to forfeit that grace, by which they are by him preserv'd from greater evils For is it not plain, that these are not Faithful Servants of God, and do not truly love him with all their heart and strength, who on so many occasions forsake his cause, promoting the interest of the World and Devil; and fail in so many points of their Duty, which their heavenly Lord, then gives them opportunity of performing and certainly expects from them?

'Tis the Obligation of every Christian, according to their different circumstances, to tread over *Daniel's* steps, and not to depart from any one Point, they see so edifying in him. 1. They are not to be tainted with or take part with evil. 2. They are to discourage and reprove the Evil, they behold in others. 3. They ought to be ready to suffer whatever inconveniencies, this complying with their duty brings on them. This we see perform'd by *Daniel* in an extraordinary manner: and since we have the same Master with him, why is it we serve him not with the same Courage and Fidelity? Why is it, we are so easily drawn in to joyn with others in such Practices and Discourses, which, in our own Judgments, we

we wholly condemn as Unreasonable, Unjust or at least Unfitting; nay, which we are bound thus to censure in obedience to God, and our Duty? While we are sensible, what it is Almighty God requires of us, is it not a great weakness to depart from that, to the defiance of our own Consciences, in compliance with I know not what pretenders to Liberty, and Setters up for enlarging the dangers of our Salvation? I am sure 'tis contrary to the Profession generally made in Confirmation, where we undertake to be Faithful Soldiers of Jesus Christ, and fight against whatever is contrary to him: and I think, we might with as much reason court such our Friends we meet, who either squint or stammer, are Deaf or Lamé, by endeavouring to imitate them in their Deformities, as by complying with them in such other imperfections, as is too commonly done, which are of a more pernicious and dangerous Consequence. This is sinking two degrees below our Duty, whilst instead of condemning, we not only omit that, but even take part in the Evil: this is very unjustifiable in all Christians, who, by their Profession, are oblig'd to maintain the Honour and Law of Christ against all Opposers; but most insufferable in those,

those, who, by their Character and Function, have undertaken to be Guides to Salvation: for, if instead of this, they fall so much beneath their duty, as to encourage, by their Example, whatever is not only Evil, but even favours Irregularity or Disorder, I think they are False to their Master, and help to betray that Cause, which they are solemnly oblig'd to maintain.

The way of a True Christian ought to be quite another thing: that is, he ought to be so resolute in reprovng whatever he sees of Evil, and so constant in this, (due regard being ever had to the rules of Christian Prudence) that his very *Presence* should become a *Censure* of all that is Irregular; and put all into despair of ever bringing him to partake in their disorders. This is the Christian's way; such ought to be his Constancy, his Resolution and Courage; and those who any ways fall short of this Method, I fear, are wanting in these qualifications, the necessary Supports of their Character; and when they should be acting according to these Principles, by their Faint-heartedness are put upon finding Reasons to dispense with their Duty.

'Tis

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'Tis true, there are none can take this way, but they shall be most likely expos'd to Suffering, to Reproaches, Mockery and Hatred: but, what if it were to Lions too, you see we are to bear it? And is it not much better to loose the good Opinion of such Men and suffer all their Reproaches, by opposing their Weakness and Liberty, than to purchase their good Will, by complying with their Infirmities? For all such Suffering as this, is for a good Cause, and I question not, is a certain way, that lead's to a Crown. Grant me then, O Lord, this Constancy and Resolution of mind, that no evil may prevail on me, that I may make war against every thiug, that's contrary to thee, and that in this I may shew my self thy Disciple.

Wednesday

*Wednesday.**Passion Week.*

L E S S O N.

Levit. C. 19. V. 11. ends V. 18.

K *Keep my Laws : for I am your Lord, your God.* In this Lesson is presented to us a Catalogue of the Principal Sins against God and our Neighbour : And I question not, but the design of the Church in this, is, that being now in Passion-week, and the time, wherein we commemorate our general Redemption, drawing near every Christian may look into themselves, and purify their Souls from the guilt of these offences, which otherwise, will render them incapable of having part in the Blessings of this holy Time. For this end, what can we do better, than look over these Sins again, and this day make a short reflection, how far we may be concern'd in them, that thus we may discover, what work we have at present on our hands,

Hear

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Hear then what our Lord spoke to the Children of Israel; for in the same manner he at present speaks to every one of us in particular. 1. Thou shalt not steal. 2. Thou shalt not lye, nor shall any one deceive his Neighbour. 3. Thou shalt not swear falsely, nor profane the Name of thy God. 4. Thou shalt not spread calumnies against thy neighbour, nor oppress him by force. 5. Thou shalt not keep back the Wages of the hir'd Servant. 6. Thou shalt not curse the Deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the Blind. 7. Thou shalt do nothing that is Wicked, nor judge unjustly. 8. Thou shalt not contemn the Person of the Poor, nor honour the Rich; but judge every one according to Justice. 9. Thou shalt not be a Detractor, nor a Tale-bearer, nor shalt thou stand up against the blood of thy Neighbour. 10. Thou shalt not hate thy Brother in thy heart; but reprove him, that thou partake not in his Sin. 11. Thou shalt not seek revenge, nor bear in mind any injury done to thee. These are the Sins we are here expressly commanded by Almighty God to avoid, and the Church requires the same of us, most particularly at this time. For it being now a time, wherein we are preparing to go up, in Spirit, to Mount Calvary, she desires

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desires we would go up to this Holy Mount in such a manner, and approach to the great Solemnity of Christ's Passion, with such true dispositions of Soul, as there to partake of the effects of his sufferings. Now what fruit can we reasonably expect, if we go in Sin? with what assurance can we appear in the presence of Christ Crucifi'd, if our Souls are so engag'd in evil, that we seem ready even to Crucify him over again? For this reason, if we have any true love for our Souls, it ought to be every Christians serious business, to disengage and wholly deliver themselves from all, whatever they apprehend to be displeasing to him: for though the Passion of Christ be a remedy of Sin, yet it is not so for obstinate and perverse Sinners, who go on in the way of their own wicked desires, in defiance both to his Mercy and his Wrath; but only for Repenting Sinners, who Sincerely resolve to forsake all their evils, and faithfully return to their duty.

Hence such as hope to receive benefit from the Passion of our Lord, look now before-hand, and endeavour to Copy out in their own hearts, the same Holy Sentiments, they behold in his: and therefore, as they see in him a Detestation of Sin, an earnest Desire of

L Conquer.

Conquering it, a Resolution of suffering the extremity of all Pain and Torments for the effecting this : So they strive to render their Souls conformable to his; first by raising in themselves, upon the best motives, a real abhorrence of all Sin; Secondly, by earnestly desiring to master and overcome all they know of Evil: and Lastly Resolving, to refuse no pains or Scourges from whatever hand they come, for the accomplishing this their truly Christian design; such Sentiments as these, such a disposition thus agreeable to Christ's, by which a Christian sincerely espouses the same cause with him is certainly the best preparation for the Holy Time now approaching, and the most assured means of being partaker of the fruits of our Redemption.

But who can be so happy, as to hope for this, since we live encompass'd with so many Infirmities, that 'tis very hard being free from all these Transgressions here mention'd; and if none must venture to Mount Calvary, but such as are not in Sin; how few how very few must come there? 'Tis true, the number of such as are Innocent, is but small. But, such is the Mercy of God, that whilst he excepts against perverse and stubborn Sinners,

He opens his arms, and invites all those to him, who being sensible of their Weaknesses, and finding themselves oppress'd with the weight of their Sins, earnestly desire to be at liberty; to be deliver'd from the infirmities, which afflict them, and from the burthen of their Iniquities, under which they are in danger of Sinking. 'Tis not therefore, that those ought to be discourag'd; who perceive themselves subject to many of the Failings here set down; but only such as are content with the Evils they feel, who are led along by the violence of disorderly and wicked Passions, and use not just endeavours for mastering or moderating them; for to these I can give no hopes, since all that is within them is corrupt, since their pleasure is in establishing Sin, which Christ suffers the worst of Torments, that he may destroy.

What therefore we ought to aim at, since we cannot presume to be wholly Innocent, is, Sincerely to declare war, at least, against Sin; it is to lament the Miseries of our repeated Offences, and joyn to our Sighs, most resolute endeavours, in order to the overcoming all those ill habits, to which we are subject; 'tis to have no peace with any Enemy of God, but ever to

keep watch against them, ever to strive to weaken, and by degrees dispossess them of all that Power and Command they have within us. And tho', while I am under this exercise, and managing this troublesome affair I have upon my hands, I may still perceive failings, yet I will not be dejected; for I have a certain Confidence in my God, that if I am displeas'd with my Sins, if I sincerely fight the Battles of my Lord, with hopes of being Conqueror at last; however the Battle may last long, yet he will not cast me off, nor banish me from the holy Mount; no, I am assur'd, his Coming on Earth was to seek and heal such Sinners, and his Sufferings was to obtain help and succours, for them. Assist me then, O God, for the preparing my Soul against this Holy Time: I heartily desire this might be, by being freed from all Sin: But I will be content with whatever Portion of Grace thou shalt bestow on me. If any Sins yet remain, I will endeavour to destroy them; and if I go thus fighting every step up to Mount Cavalry, I hope I shall still partake of the Blessings of that Place.

Thursday

Thursday

Passion Week.

LESSON.

Dan. C. 3. V. 34. ends 45.

A *Ccept us in a Contrite Heart and Humble Spirit.* 'Twas the complaint of *Azarias*, that in the time of their Captivity, the Jews had neither Prince nor Prophet; nor Holocaust, nor Sacrifice, nor Oblation, nor Incense, by means of which they might find Mercy with God, and therefore takes refuge in a Contrite and Humble heart, and hopes so firmly in the Goodness of God, that placing their trust in him, he has confidence they shall not be confounded. 'Twas a great action in this Holy man, when he saw himself in the midst of the fiery furnace and wholly abandon'd by all, thus perfectly to raise his heart to God in behalf of himself and his people, and so entirely to place his confidence in him, upon the hopes of his Mercy and a Contrite heart. I can't tell, how near we shall come in practice to

222 *Thursday Passion Week.*

this example, but I know what our duty is: Not to sink down and be dejected upon every trouble that afflicts us, so that every ordinary disappointment, becomes as a weight on our Spirits, that presses us more down into the Earth, and as a blind on our Eyes, which in some manner hiding Heaven from us, takes God out of our sight; that we truly make good in us, what David says of the Mountains: *Tange montes & fumigabunt*: If God do, but touch them with his finger, they are presently in darkness and smoke. Whereas this is truly to pervert the design of Heaven, who in afflicting us, expects instead of being cast down, we should look up at him, from whose hand the stroke comes; Look up, I say, and adore his Justice; for being Just in all he do's, 'tis our duty ever to confess him so; 'tis our duty to praise him in that his Attribute, in which he is as truly Adorable, as in the rest; and offer up to him whatever we suffer, since we can suffer nothing, but what is a Homage due from us to him. For as we bear the Character of his Disciples, 'tis our duty, to be ever in readiness of forsaking all for him, and to love nothing so much, as to prefer the possession of it, before his Will. Hence, as often as God deprives us of what

what is most comfortable and dear to us, as our Health, our Ease, our Convenience, our Quiet, our Friends, we are oblig'd to consider this, as proceeding from his Holy Will, and that by his Orders and appointment we are commanded to part with so much for his Sake. If we thus accept it and endeavour cheerfully to submit, we answer our Character; but if it be receiv'd with Murmuring, excessive and affected Grief; is it not a demonstration, that we love what is taken from us, more than God's Will? And how can we persuade our selves, that we are prepar'd to forsake all for Christ, who upon his touching us in a sensible part, and demanding even one thing from us, we either rebelliously Murmur against him, or cowardly sink down, as under a burthen, too heavy for us to bear? This is not raising our hearts to Heaven, as *Azarias*, from the midst of the Furnace; but 'tis even deserting our Cause, before we come in earnest to the Trial. As far then as we are wanting in this part of our duty, we are bound to use our best endeavours for supplying the defect; for obtaining a greater strength of mind, and a more perfect resignation to the Will of God. And our endeavours must go yet farther, that is, to fortify our Souls with

such an *assured Confidence in the Divine Goodness*, as not to loose our Hopes in God, notwithstanding all the arguments of Despair about us. A good Soul thinks often of God, and, not with passing glances, but with fix'd thoughts dwells so long on the consideration of his Mercy, Fidelity, Compassion, Fatherly Protection and Goodness, that his heart is fully possess'd with the Greatness of it, sees it to be Infinite, Inexhaustible, nay that he is Essentially all this, that he cannot be separated from it, that 'tis impossible he should forsake or abandon any one, that sincerely depends on him. Hence arises such a confidence and Hope in him, so well grounded, so securely built and supported, that, however Distress and Accidents may terrify Nature yet imperfect, yet, upon reflection, it cannot diminish that Hope he has in God; but there is ever a certain Sweetness and Peace in the Centre of his Heart, notwithstanding all that bitterness and confusion that's about him. 'Tis this interior Comfort and Confidence in God has carried his Servants thro' the severest trials, and fill'd them with joy under the greatest Oppressions: for their *Hope* being like their *Faith* equally founded on God, tho' it may suffer very furious assault, yet it can

can never be overthrown : for as their *Faith* is secur'd by God's *Truth*, which cannot deceive ; so is their *Hope* by his *Goodness*, his *Promises* and *Power*, which cannot fail : thus as by a sure Anchor, they are fastn'd to a Rock, and neither Waves nor Storms can force them from their hold.

But then, they are ever careful to have their *Hope* accompanied with a true *Contrition* of Heart, as knowing, there's nothing can possibly obstruct the effect of God's *Goodness*, but their own unworthiness. For tho' the Fountains of the Divine Bounty and Mercy are infinit and ever overflowing, yet our Sins turn those streams from us, so that we can expect no benefit from that abundance, as long as indispos'd by Sin, our hearts are shut against them. Hence it is the Practice of all Pious Christians, as soon as they perceive the hand of God to touch them in any Affliction, whether immediately proceeding from Himself, or from the Malice of others, presently to have recourse to *Contrition*, and endeavour by Sighs and Tears to make their Peace with God ; that so, if the present Evil be a just Punishment of their Sins, they may, by a sincere Repentance, remove the occasion of their Misfortune ; or, at least, if it be the

effect of his unsearchable Providence they may take out of the way all Impediments, which may hinder the flowing in of his Grace, necessary for the Cure of the Evil, or the bearing it with Christian Patience. This was the method *Azarias* took, and with such miraculous Success, that 'tis sufficient to encourage us to embrace the same. Misfortunes and Trials we cannot want in this Life; but we may be easily wanting in our duty of supporting them as we ought: let then this holy Servant of God in the midst of the Furnace be our Pattern; in all our Troubles, let us cast our eyes on him, and there learn, not to murmur or be dejected, but ever to raise our hearts to God, with a Faith in his Power and Promise, with Hope in his Goodness, and Submission to his Will, and if these Acts be attended with a contrite Heart, we may be assur'd, he will either powerfully deliver us or powerfully assist us: and by a light from him, we shall be convinc'd, that we suffer for Justice to punish us, for a Trial to Humble us; or for his Glory to sanctify us.

Friday,

Passion Week.

L E S S O N.

Jer. C. 17. V. 13. ends V. 18

BE not a Terror to me, O Lord; Thou art my hope in the day of evil, Those Christians will be very unfortunate to whom God himself shall become a Terror: It was the apprehension of this evil made this holy Prophet cry out: *Be not a Terror to me, O Lord.* And surely, when we consider our selves, and, see we are so far from having any thing of our own to trust to, that all is full of sin and misery, blindness, uncertainty and insensibility; tis plain we have only this one thing to afford us any relief, and that is to have a Confidence in God, and hope, that he, in his Mercy and Goodness, will be our Protector and our Comfort. This, I say, is all we have to trust to; and 'tis all sufficient for those, who place this Trust aright: and no question, he will answer all their expectations,

peftations, and fill them with joys beyond measure. But what a furprifing confternation will it be to fuch, who waiting for God to be their comfort, fhall at length find him to be their greateft Terror? This is a misfortune too great to be exprefs'd; and too Terrifying to be truly conceiv'd; for Christians to be looking for their God, and inftead of being reliev'd with the fweetnefs of his Goodnefs, to be ftruck with confufion and death, at the fight of his Majefty, whom they have offended: *Terribiliter magnificatus es*: to thefe he will be magnified in his Terrors. O God, I adore thy Majefty, and earneftly defire thy Name to be glorified in all Nations; but as for me, O God, let me not be convinc'd of thy Greatnefs by the terrors of thy Juftice, but by thy Infinite Compaffion on my weaknefs, and the more defirable effects of thy Mercy.

This, I doubt not, are the common wifhes of us all: but what method do we take, for the accomplifhment of thefe our defires, and not being difappointed in our wifhes? You have heard what the Prophet fays: *All, that forfake thee, O Lord, fhall be confounded.* This dreadful Confufion fhall unavoidably be their Portion: who forfake their God. Now, there's no queftion,

but living in Sin, is forsaking God; following the Suggestions of the Flesh and the World, is forsaking God; being directed by Pride, Covetousness or Revenge, is forsaking God, and if by true Repentance such as these change not their hearts, they must, at length, necessarily be confounded, and they will find God to be their Terror. For when Death, at last, by destroying their Senses, shall open their Understanding, and discover to them on one side the Truth of their Past-follies, and on the other the Goodness and Mercy of God, and the unspeakable Treasure of Love in the Passion of their Redeemer; this will be such a Conviction and Reproach of their Blindness, Ingratitude and Unworthiness, that the sight of God will be their greatest confusion and torment, and those very Fountains of Mercy, the Wounds of their Redeemer, will fill them with Rage and Despair. The light of God's Presence will only serve to shew them their own deformity; and not suffering that light, which they hate, they will even choose (as a Saint observes) to hide themselves in Hell, as a shelter against the reproaches of their own guilt. Sad condition of these, whose only remedy is in flying from their God! *Terribiliter magnificatus es:*

To

To these he is magnified in terror, because by their wickedness they had before forsaken him.

But are we not still to consider, whether many others have not reason to fear something of this very Fate, tho' they live not in the practice of these grosser Sins? 'Tis the consequence you see of Forsaking God; as far then as we depart from him, so much reason have we to apprehend something of this Evil. Now 'tis evident, we so far depart from him, as we forsake his Law: and in how many particulars may this be, tho' we be careful to avoid the more notorious Crimes? For see, he commands us to be Humble and Meek, to be Patient in Troubles, to forgive Injuries, to love our Enemies, to do Good for Evil, to esteem those happy that Suffer, to think it a blessing to be Reproach'd and oppress'd for Justice sake, to mortify our Passions, to deny our Selves, not to love the World; he commands us to put on and live by his Spirit; Now his Spirit is a Spirit of Sweetness and Goodness towards all Men, 'tis a Spirit of zeal for Justice, of hatred for all Sin, of love for Sinners, 'tis the Spirit of the Cross, of crucifying our own Wills and of continual Sacrifice; 'tis the Spirit of forsaking all Creatures,
of

of dying to the World and our Selves and living to God alone, and doing all things for love of him. If then we live not by this Spirit; if we so culpably omit our Duty in any of these points, that the Tenor of our Lives is contrary to these his Directions and the Maxims of the Gospel, have we not reason to condemn our selves, in so far departing from Christ; inasmuch as the following any other Spirit contrary to his, is truly forsaking him? And if we forsake him, shall we not be confounded? The Prophet says we shall: And will he not then be a Terror to us? 'Tis what we have reason to fear. Let us then settle this Point this Day; First consider, whom we at present follow, and resolve to cut off, whatever we find not conformable to him. If corrupt Nature, the Devil, or the World put into be our Directors, we must protest against them, and make choice of Christ our Redeemer to be our Guide in all our ways. The Prophet says: *Ego non sum turbatus te Pastorem sequens*, I have not been troubled in following thee, O Lord, my Shepherd. If we think seriously to escape the greatest of Troubles, it must be by taking Christ for our Pastor, by hearing his Voice, obeying his Commands and living by his Spirit.

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Spirit. The making this easy now will be the sure Means of entailing on us an eternal Peace; and the only way of securing us against the greatest of all Misfortunes, That God will never be a Terror to us.

*Saturday
Passion Week.*

LESSON.

Jerem. C. 18. V. 18. to the end.

Then said the Jews: Come, let us contrive against the Just. In these words is express'd the Malice of the Jews against the Prophet *Jeremy*: and these the Church makes choice of, to put us in mind of the malicious Designs of the same People against Jesus our Redeemer. Hardned against all his Mercies they conspire against Him; blinded with Obstinacy, they see not the Wonders of his Goodness; unmov'd by his Miracles, insensible of his Doctrine, stupid under all his Cures, and deaf to all his Calls, they think of nothing, but
to

to destroy the Author of Life: *Come, let us contrive against him.* This strange Perverseness of theirs ought to raise in us at present a Detestation of their Malice; and set us upon the Watch, that while we condemn their Wickedness, we be careful not to imitate them in our yet more intolerable Ingratitude and Blindness. Christ himself has said; *He that is not with me, is against me:* If we are not laboring to take part with Christ, by fulfilling his Will and obeying his Commands, we take part with the *Jews*, and with them conspire against him: there is no mean betwixt these two extremes; If we are not for him, we are against him. Approaching therefore now to the Time, wherein we solemnly Commemorate his *Sufferings*, wherein we consider him amidst the *Jews* tormenting him on the one side, and his Pious Followers bewailing him on the other, it ought to be our Business to reflect on our selves and see, which side we espouse. If we are for him, we shall certainly be asserting his Interest and promoting his Cause.

Now, What is the Cause he has undertaken? It is to destroy Sin, to overthrow the Tyranny of the Devil, to overcome the World and the Flesh, and set us at perfect liberty. Are we espousing

pouling this Cause, or no? We need not look beyond our selves for a decision; for we have have all these Powers of darkness sensibly working within us: If we give ear to them, and permit our selves to be directed by their Suggestions, 'tis plain, whose side we are on. This all those unhappy Christians can determine for themselves, who live in the practice of any notorious Sin; they know they are engag'd in an interest quite opposit to Christ, and are daily enlarging the Kingdom of Satan. This how often do they do by their Sinful discourses, by their loose and scandalous Actions, by the encouragement they give to all manner of Liberty and Excesses? By these methods they spread their Poyson and infect many well-meaning Souls: first drawing them in, and then by degrees hardning them in evil, till at length they boldly trample on all the Means of Salvation: 'tis plain, I say, whose side they maintain, whilst Christ Suffering for the destruction of Sin, they are spending their Mony and their Time to support and propogate it, and even place all their delight in what is thus contrary to their Duty, and the designs of his Goodness. Christ Suffering for Sin, and they delighting in it. Are they for him, or against him?

There

There are many others, I fear, tho not directly abetting, yet so much favouring this Party, that they are to be number'd amongst those, who unthinkingly, at least, contrive against Christ. And as to this Point, let all those examine themselves, who discover in their Souls a love of Ease, an earnestness to please and humour themselves in every thing; a fondness of the common methods of the World, of its entertainments, diversions, foolish Liberties; are ever ready to encourage them; are impatient upon every disappointment; take part in all manner of unprofitable and uncharitable Discourses; admire Flatteries and Applauses, with much more of this kind of Infirmities: For in all these there is, so much of Corrupt Nature, of Sensuality and the World, that there's no going on in this way, without weakning the Interest of Christianity, and promoting a Cause, which either in it self, or in its consequences, is truly contrary to the Gospel. For, consider; Is this the way Christ taught? His Command is, that we ought to hate the World and forsake it, as much as may be, because the ways of the World are contrary to His: He bids us be Humble and Patient, and Deny our selves, take up our Cross, and

and do works of Penance, and declares ; if we love our selves, that is, with the love of this World, it is the certain way to loose our selves, and ruin our Souls for ever. Is it not plain then, how those great Numbers, who understan little and practice less of this Life of Christ, but are carried away with the torrent, and live the common life of worldly Men, are truly conspiring against Christ, by promoting a method very disagreeable to his, by following a Rule and Law different from his, by favouring the World, which he declares to be his Enemy ; by loving themselves, their interest and pleasure, which he enjoyns them to renounce ?

This, I fear, great Numbers do, without seriously reflecting, what is the end of their Calling ; and I wish there were any truly Innocent in this point: For I see the current practice even of those esteem'd Good, has so authoriz'd this method, that few discover any reason to doubt of its being Evangelical. Hence it is, most Christians are learned enough in this way, to find Pretexs for not receiving such uneasy Truths, as are like to incommode them in any thing: and those Doctrines, which oblige them to retrench such liberties as favour Self-love and Ease, they plausibly reject,

reject, as Severe, and the Notions of Morose and Melancholy Saints: Thus they go on boldly, studying their own temporal convenience, making the World and all Creatures serve their ends, and thinking but by halves of the obligation they are under, of employing themselves and all creatures to the honour and service of God. And what is this, but in its degree, contriving against Christ? But if it has been so: ought it to go on still in this Holy Time? Certainly the Sufferings of Christ ought to prevail on us to change our method at present, and turn our hearts from admiring our selves and the world, to the love of Him. Let us then joyn no longer with the *Jews* in conspiring against him, but wholly bend our endeavours, for the destroying his Enemies: Let us remember, that all he suffers is for us; and if we suffer something in his cause, 'tis what he deserves from us; the opposing the world and all that is pleasing to Sense, is fighting for him, and whoever holds on in this warfare with Patience and constancy, shall receive a Crown.

Palm-

Palm-Sunday.

E P I S T L E.

Philip. C. 2. V. 5. ends V. 11.

Have the same Sentiments with Jesus Christ. In receiving the Palms this day, we honour Christ as our King; and in taking part in his triumphs, proclaiming Hosanna to the Son of David, we own him to be our Lord and Sovereign, and profess our obedience to him. And what is this, but to desire him to give laws to our Soul, to choose him for our Director and Governour, and make a surrender of our selves to his Command. And ought we not then, in the first place, have the same Sentiments with him? Without this, we only perform the ceremony of the day, but omit the more substantial Duty. And what are his Sentiments? First, he humbled himself; and being God, became as nothing, taking on him the form of a Servant. Here's the first step we are to take; truly to Humble our selves this Day, according to the Pattern given us by Christ. He, being God, laid by all

all the glory of his Divinity, and became as a Servant, in Satisfaction for our Offences. Now if our Sins have this effect on Innocence its self, so as to cover it with the Infamy of an Offender; if thus they draw a darkness over the Majesty of God, and humble it to the Meanness of a Servant; in what manner ought we to humble our selves this Day, who, our selves being vile Worms, Dust and Nothing, have the Guilt of our Sins, our Insolence, and Rebellion against our God, to cast us still down infinit degrees below that Nothing; which before we were. There needs no more than the consideration of what we really are, to raise in us all the Sentiments of a true and perfect Humility, and to oblige us to confess our selves Nothing in the sight of God; but then to consider the Pride of this Nothing, in refusing to obey its God; in contemning his Commands, in casting off his Authority, in rebelling against Him, is a weight, that sinks us much lower: and then to place our selves in the presence of our God suffering for this our disobedience and Ingratitude, and so severely humbled for our Pride; are such aggravating Thoughts, that whoever seriously reflects on it, must not only enter into the Sentiments of Christ in being truly hum:

humble; but be wholly surpriz'd and confounded at this their intolerable Insolence, and pronouncing Sentence against themselves, declare, 'tis the Goodness only of God, that can suffer it, and that preserves them from falling into that worse than Nothing, which they abundantly deserve. Thus ought we this Day Humble our selves in the Presence of our Redeemer, and, with all possible Gratitude, return him thanks, that being thus miserably criminal, he requires no more from us, than to transcribe into our Souls, what we behold in him, that is, for us Sinners to be as Humble, as he that never offended; for Criminals to suffer no otherwise, than he who never transgress'd. Blessed be this thy Goodness, O Jesus, who hast shewn us how to return to our Father, and undertaking to be our Master, teachest us no Lesson, but what, for our encouragement, thou first lets us see the Practice in thy self. And do's not the Thought of this thy infinit Goodness, as it raises us, so likewise humble us still more? Infinitely unhappy they, whom neither their own unworthiness, nor thy Goodness can make them sensible of this Duty.

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But wherever this takes effect, it will not abide fruitless, but will certainly draw more of Jesus into their Souls; there will not be his Humility only, but his Obedience too; it being impossible for a Soul to be truly Humble upon these motives, but it will be also Obedient: So that, as Christ our Lord, in that his state of Humility, became as a Servant, that is, faithfully offer'd himself to comply with all the commands of his Father; So will every Christian, that has once a real sense of his unworthiness, and of the infinit Mercy of God, in bearing with it, sincerely offer himself to perform all those commands, his Heavenly Father shall lay on him. Inasmuch as he must necessarily think it just for dust and ashes to serve that Power, which made it; to love that Infinit Goodness, which spar'd it in its Sins; and follow that adorable Example of its Jesus, who invites it to follow him. And what, if through its natural Corruption, it finds a difficulty in the discharge of this duty; this ought to hinder nothing: For if Christ, innocent and Spotless, becomes obedient to his Father, not only in the plain and easie way, but even to the dying on the Cross; ought there any difficulty be sufficient to discourage us Sinners, and put us out of the way of our

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Obedience?

Obedience? Alas, all that we are capable of Suffering, is so little in comparison of what we deserve, and so inconsiderable, in regard of what God deserves from us, that I think, we ought to rejoice, that, after so great unworthiness, he will accept any Service from our hands, or admit us to contribute to the glory of his Name, who are only Worms and Vessels of dishonor.

We give thee thanks, O Lord, for this thy infinit condescension to us: and though seduced by our Pride, by our Wickedness and our Sloth, we have hitherto too often become thy enemies and made our selves unlike to thee; yet now we desire to have the same thoughts with thee, and sincerely copy out thy Soul into ours. And first, behold, prostrating our selves in thy presence, we humbly acknowledge our own Nothing and that worse than nothing, the misery of our transgressions. We then adore thee for becoming our Example, and because, for thy Humility and Obedience, thou hast a Name given thee, to which all Knees must bow, behold we bend before thee, and require all that is within us to bless thy Name. Whatever we have of Heaven, our *Faith*, our *Hope*, our *Love of God*, behold, it now adores, and confesses all to be built on thee:

thee : whatever we have of earth, the Blessings of thy Fatherly hand, it here adores ; we own 'tis all from thee, and to Thee we desire to return it. Whatever we have of Hell, all our Concupiscence, our Passions, and all other inheritance of Sin, we force it now here to stoop before thee, and doom it to a perpetual Obedience to thy Law. But this Obedience, O Lord, must be the effect of thy Grace ; grant us then, in this time of Mercy, so large a portion of it, that as by thy Grace, we have been regenerated and become thy Children, so by the same bounty, we may be thy Servants and Followers forever.

M 2*Munday*

Munday.

Holy-Week.

LESSON.

Isai. C. 50. V. 5. ends V. 10.

THIS Lesson is rather a History than a Prophecy, of what the Son of God suffer'd for our Redemption: by which we may easily apprehend, the intention of the Church is, to call us at present to the consideration of our Saviours Passion, and confining our thoughts to this subject, to consecrate this Week to God, and truly keep it Holy, according to the Name it bears. For this end we shall find all the Lessons and Gospels still carrying us to this Point; and I think, we cannot do better than follow this direction: and because it is too large a matter for one day, therefore we'll divide it, as is usually done, into several heads, and make it serve for the whole week. 'Tis what we should, with gratitude, consider all our lives, but most especially at this time; and the omission

of

of it now cannot be without a crime.
First then :

The Agony of Jesus in the Garden.

OF all that pass'd here, as to the Exterior, we have a full account from the Holy Scripture : but, as to what pass'd in the Soul of Jesus, the greatest part is unknown to us. We know, his Mind was struck with the Idea of something most Terrible, which he calls *his Chalice*; That he pray'd his Father, that he might not drink it; that, however, he submitted his Will to his Father's, and freely accepted this Chalice from his Father's hand; that the impression it made on his Soul, was so quick and violent, as to cast him into a Sort of Agony or interior Conflict, and made the Blood break forth on every side. This is what the Word of God relates to us ; but, as to the Interior, how much is hid from us ! Many Fathers conclude, 'twas the lively prospect of his approaching Torments and Death on the Cross, rais'd this Storm : And that he permitted this Natural Repugnance of his Sensible Part, so to comfort his Members and Followers, when they should be seiz'd with the like Ter-

rors. 'Twas a design of thy Love, O Jesus, to be tempted in all things, even the most Imperfect, without Sin, that we might find comfort and relief under all our apprehensions and fears. To grieve and be perplex'd, was a weakness, which might, and therefore ought to be undergone by Thee, for our Example, that we might learn of Thee this difficult Lesson, how to hold out, when ready to sink under Tribulation and Anguish. This was a wonderful Humility of our Redeemer, who being Author of all the Courage of the Martyrs, was pleas'd to appear under all the apprehensions and weaknesses of the most dejected. But the more he has humbled himself, the Greater things has he done for us, and the greater acknowledgements of our Thanks are due to Him. And in this he has taught us, that the lowest degree of weakness allowable in good Christians, is, to ask of God to be deliver'd from the Evils we suffer; but that 'tis our Duty at the same time, that the Love of the Will of God be so prevailing in us, as to make us desire, that his Will be done, rather than our own.

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Besides this, 'tis the Thought of St. Ambrose, that Christ our Lord foresaw then in Spirit the great abuse of Christians in regard of his Sufferings, and this was so afflicting to him, as to give occasion to the chief part of this Agony. He then saw the many Disorders and Corruptions, with which his Church would be disfigur'd; which he was then going to Establish by his Blood; and he was pleas'd, that this prospect should seize his Soul with Grief; as, at another time, the sight of Jerusalem's blindness and obstinacy, in rendring all his Visits useless, drew Tears of Sorrow and Compassion from his Eyes.

However we apprehend it, it is certain our Lord was then sensible of some Interior Motion very afflicting; whence we may be encourag'd, in all Interior Motions which so often disquiet us, to acknowledge them as Commission'd from a Power above to assault us; and from this consideration, solicit Heaven, for the obtaining those Succors necessary for our resisting and triumphing over them. He that voluntarily accepted this Combat, has in this sufficiently experienc'd our Weakness, and the difficulty we have to be Conquerours; so that we cannot want confidence to address our selves to Him in all our Dan-

gers, and hope for the relief of his Divine assistance, without which we must necessarily fall a Sacrifice to our Enemies.

Let us hence lay a sure Foundation of Courage and Hope, under all Evils whatever ordain'd for the future to be our portion, and if we yield so far, as to petition for a Deliverance, let this be follow'd with an entire Submission to the Will of God; for then it is we are to practise, what we so often profess, of being his Children, his Servants and Soldiers: we may then have repeated Wishes indeed, for the having our own Will done; but our most settled Resolution must be for the doing His; and if we find resistance, if grief and dejection in this Conflict flow in upon us, we must then place our selves in Spirit near Jesus in the Garden, and as we share in his Sorrows, so beg to partake of his Submission; use a violence on Nature, and never cease, till bowing down to the Earth, we force a compliance, from our Hearts, pronouncing those holy words, in union with the resignation of Christ; *Not my Will, but Thine be done.* This most particularly ought to be our daily Practice, in preparation for our last Hour, when our Agony approaching, Nature will strive against

against it, and be willing that that Chalice may pass away: but 'tis what we must all drink of; and we cannot better prepare for't, than every day endeavouring to make Nature bend, by surrendering all into the hands of our Maker; Confessing our Life, and being belong to Him; and that what he has given, he may again demand, whenever he pleases. Let us therefore beg this Day, that whenever that Hour comes, notwithstanding all Reluctanc, we may entirely submit, and breath out our Souls with the true Spirit of Resignation; *Lord, Thy will be done.*

Tuesday.

Holy-Week.

LESSON.

Jerem. C. II. V. 18. ends V. 20.

THis Lesson is another Relation of our Redeemer's Passion: and obliges us to go on with this Subject: let us then consider this Day.

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His

His being taken in the Garden.

JESUS being humbled in the Garden to the lowest degree of weakness, that God permits in his Elect, could give no better Proof of this being his own Choice, than by that great Action immediately following, in going to meet and delivering himself to those, who came to seize him. This is a degree of Virtue more than is ordinarily requir'd from other Men; for God wills, that we withdraw our selves from approaching Evils, which seem to threaten, inasmuch as we know not, that we have strength to stand against them, and have no certainty, that God calls us to the Trial. But Jesus Christ being fully assur'd of the Will of God, made this advance towards his Enemies, Thus to testify, ~~that he went~~ willingly to die; and that it was nothing but his Charity oblig'd him to abandon himself to the Fury of his Enemies.

They make up likewise towards him, meeting his Charity with as great an excess of Hatred and Rage: having not only these Passions, but the Suggestions of the Infernal Spirits to push them on; and therefore he calls that

Power,

Power, by which they seiz'd him; *The Hour and Power of darkness*. By which we are instructed, that the Hatred, with which Men are possess'd against the Servants of God, and the designs they frame for the taking away their good Name, their Liberty and Life, come not only from the Malice of Men, but from those impressions likewise, with which they are inspir'd from the suggestion of the Devils; that God gives them power to execute their designs; that we are oblig'd to look on the Power and Will of God even in the malicious Practices of Men and Devils; and that 'tis very unjust to murmur against God, for permitting this Power over us, who permitted the very same against his only Son: Especially too, since we can never come to suffer the half part of that Rage, which was here discharg'd against him.

Thus then spurr'd on by their own natural hatred and that of Hell, they seize on his Sacred Person, and violently hurry him away before their High-Priests and Judges, to *Annas* first, and then to *Caiphas*, to Hear and Judge this Criminal. I could willingly here, methinks, discharge my Anger against this Violence: but in condemning them, I see my self arraign'd; For since He him-
self

self has positively said; *Whatever you do to any of these Little ones, ye do to Me*; This turns all my anger home to my own breast, being an Actor, not once, but many times, in all their Barbarities and Injustice. For as often as I have wrong'd Innocence, and by force brought its Cause to be judg'd by Men more partial than these Jewish Priests: as often as I have condemn'd my Neighbour unheard, on bare Presumptions, and, by my authority, have drawn in others to joyn their Votes with me; so often have I joyn'd with this blind Multitude, and seiz'd on Christ, who being *Innocence, Justice and Truth*, suffers wherever these suffer, suffers in all his Members, in every little one. O Jesus, and what condition then is mine, who, with violent hands, have so often dragg'd thee to be judg'd! Jesus bound, and hurried away by the Fury of this People, is the true Copy of my guilt; in their injustice I see my own; I see it, and, O God, may I ever see it: punish not, I beseech thee this my Sin with blindness; but since thou art pleas'd to suffer for Sin; let mine be expiated by thy Sufferings, and I'll endeavour, the Thoughts of these shall keep my Soul so watchful, as never more to have a hand in condemning Innocence,
I'll

I'll ever be mindful, What ever is done
to any of thy Littles ones, is done to
Thee.

Brought then before these Judges,
he's there endicted of unheard of
Crimes, False accusations are to prove
him guilty, a Servant strikes him on
the Face, he's Blinded, Buffeted, Spit
on, and what torments him most, he's
here denied by *Peter*, who having but
just before maintain'd his Master's cause,
and protested that he would die with
him, now on the suddain, grows cold
and heartless, is terrified by the voice
of a Silly Maid, Protests and Swears he
knows nothing of the Man. See, how
unsafe is all Confidence in Human
Strength. One would have thought
the Principles of this Great Apostle bred
up in the School of Christ, might have
sufficiently arm'd him against such
weak assaults; and yet, behold, like a
poor, ignorant, undisciplin'd Man, he
presently gives up his Cause and yields.
The truth is, he wanted neither Know-
ledge of his Duty, nor Courage; nei-
ther Zeal nor Strength, being ever of
all the Apostles, the most forward to
defend his Master's right, but I fear he
presum'd a little too much of this
Strength of his, and thought not e-
nough, How vain it is to trust in Man;
that

that if God puts not forth his Hand to help, all Human Power is nothing: Therefore at once to learn this humbling Lesson, God lets him fall; so to teach him, for the future, to build his Confidence on better grounds; not to depend on his own Virtue, but ever to rely on the Divine assistance, on the Succors of heavenly Grace: and to convince him still better of his weakness, Behold the Crowing of the Cock raises him not; but he continues in his Apostacy, till his Good Master, by an awakening Glance, at once opens and warms his Breast, melting his stony Heart into Tears of Penance, with which he ever after water'd his Aged Cheeks. O God, if thus the Virtue of an Apostle is too weak to trust to, but presently gives way, when once he builds upon't; how miserable am I, if ever a good Opinion of my self persuades me to depend on my own Strength! This is the ready way to be left by Thee, and be convinc'd of my Infirmary, by miserably falling into Sin. But however, if at any time, blinded with Self-love I should be thus unhappy: Forget me not in that distress of soul; but with a favourable Glance of Heavenly light, powerfully touch my Heart, that so rais'd by thy Grace, I may

may own my Presumption and thy Power, and having effectually bewail'd my Sin, return again to Thee, and trusting no more in any thing that's mine, I may for ever trust in Thee.

Wednesday

Holy-Week.

LESSONS.

Isa. C. 62. V. 11, 12. & C. 63. V.

1. 7. Isa. C. 53. V. 1. ends V. 12.

Tis still the Passion of our Lord we are to consider, and for this Day, let it be his Silence in all his Sufferings.

Silence of Jesus in his Passion.

Whatever there is more than Human in all the Passion of our Lord, it principally appears in the Silence he observ'd. 'Tis by our Words are generally manifested all our Passions; and these are never more provok'd, than when we are brought to the point of

of Defending our Life. Then the Desire of living puts us upon justifying our selves; then Choler pushes us on, with reproach, to lay open all Injustice us'd against us, and all the other Passions express themselves in their different language for our defence. This is what is natural to us; but Jesus Christ speaks not at all, except when 'tis necessary to bear Witness of the Truth; and after that, nothing can move him to speak; in which he proves his Conduct, is not from Passion, but from Reason divinely assisted. 'Tis his Will, we should ever practise those Virtues proper to our State wherein we are, and not labor in those, which are out of Season. Now to the Passion of our Lord there could be none more suitable, than a Patience invincible, accompanied with Sweetness and Silence. Tho' there could be none indeed but Jesus could then truly practise these: Every body, besides him, would have been overwhelmed in Spirit with the trouble of so intolerable an Injustice.

But by his silence we see, he had his thoughts more on God than man: his only business was to finish the work recommended to him by his Father, and though this was to be effected by the malice of men, yet 'twas without sinking

ing or even yielding under it. Rather he took care, in the manner of his Suffering and in his excusing it, to shew us, there's something worthy our compassion even in the very excess of Injustice ; since it always proceeds from a certain Blindness, which hinders the actors from seeing the evil they do. Though man's spirit, too sensible of the evil it suffers, looks not about for any Excuse, whereby to lessen it ; but on the contrary, is ever subtil in discovering all manner of circumstances, whereby 'tis possible to be any ways exaggerated. 'Twas not so with Jesus Christ. The Blindness of men moves compassion in him, even then, when he feels the most terrible effects of it ; and for this reason, there are found no signs of Impatience in all he suffers, but he keeps a strict and holy Silence throughout his Passion.

How unlike are we to him ; how far from this holy Disposition and Command of our selves; whilst not Governing our Passions, they so easily break out and betray themselves in our words? How often is it we practice a secret revenge on others, by casting out such words, we hope will gall our Neighbour? How often again, prompted by Self-love, do we let fall words, to gain esteem and praise, even while we suffer?

How

258 *Wednesday Holy-Week.*

How is it, that so many by-designs of human respect or interest, go mix'd with almost all we say? And can there be any more effectual means to be deliver'd from this secret corruption, than to address our selves to Jesus in this his Silence amidst his Sufferings? Let us then sincerely beg of him this day, that we may partake something of that Holy Spirit, by which we may be so strongly united to God, that the greatest of Injustices may not be able to force from us any unnecessary complaint.

How happy a day to our Souls would this be, could we obtain this Blessing! 'Tis certain this Silence of our Redeemer was for our example; and as the following it, would be our greatest advantage; so the passing it by with an entire neglect, must be as great a misery, and too plain an argument of our not being his Disciples, or, at least, being so at too great a distance from him. What then have we to produce in our behalf? If every real or imagin'd injury makes us complain; are we in this our Lord's Disciples? If every affront presently shews it self in anger and injurious words; have we any thing of our Lord in this? If every wrong that is done us, puts all into disorder and spurs us forward to revenge; is this to be like our Lord?

Lord? If every dislike we have of any, shews it self in our uneasie carriage and in biting words: if every trouble, disappointment, infirmity or pain, casts us into dejection or impatience, what resemblance have we of our Master? Truly, upon reflection, I cannot see, in any thing we come shorter of our duty, than in this: since Christ giving us the example of a perfect Silence, amidst the provocations of the highest malice; we bear nothing so, but let every little Occasion be sufficient, first to disquiet us, and then to put us upon publishing our troubles in complaints. Alas! This shews, how little courage we have; how much we love our selves, who cannot rest till vve have mov'd others to pity and compassion: vvhwhereas a due reflection on vvhhat our Sins deserve, vvhould rather oblige us to renounce all such Satisfaction, and be contented vwith this only thought, That vve have God for Witness of all vve suffer; his knowing our evils, ought to be enough to make all farther information needless, except vvhwhere Charity or Justice oblige us to seek for remedy. And tho' this vway be difficult, to our uneasie Nature, vvhich under all oppressions, is restless, till its conditon's knowvn and pitied, yet ought vve not still endeavour

deavours to Imitate our Lord, and not wonder, if we cannot follow him at ease? If the steps are hard, they were his first, he has led the way and we must ever strive to follow, and above all, in this, though it costs us dear: For since our daily and most frequent Sins are in Words, speaking such things as are very injurious to our Souls and provoking to our Lord, what juster satisfaction can we make, that by our Silence, punishing the Member, which has offended; and letting our Self-denials be, in contradicting that very Inclination, which has so often led us into Sin? This would be the ready way to our eternal peace. Peace then, unruly Member, and let this Holy Charm lay that evil Spirit, by which thou movest: And if thou wilt at any time complain, let it be of thy own misery and rashness; let it be of thy daily disobedience to thy God. Pardon then, O Lord, the infinite offences, by which, in my Words, I have transgress'd thy Law, I confess my Weakness in this point; and though I have made many Sinful complaints; yet now for the future let none be heard from me, but this; I have Sin'd, O Lord, I have Sin'd, my miseries are infinite, and I have no help but in Thee.

Mandy-

Mandy Thursday.

E P I S T L E.

1 Cor. C. II. V. 20. ends V. 32.

THis being a Day Sacred for the Institution of the Holy Eucharist, when Christ, at his Last Supper, Consecrated Bread and Wine into his Body and Blood, giving his Command and Power to Priests to Consecrate and make a daily Oblation of the same as a perpetual remembrance of his Death and Passion; we must therefore, in consideration of this Adorable Mystery, interrupt our former thoughts, and for this day apply them wholly to this.

Jesus Christ being now ready to finish his Mortal Life, reserv'd for the end the greatest Effects of his Love; and therefore having eaten the Passover with his Disciples, so to abolish the Antient Law, he was pleas'd to Substitute, in place of all those Figures, that Truth, which had been represented by them: The Eating the True Lamb, in place of the Figurative Lamb; The Offering of the Lamb
of

of God, in place of the Sacrifice of the Paschal Lamb. This great Design he put in execution in a manner worthy of himself. He made known to his Disciples the earnest desire he had to accomplish this great Mystery: *Desiderio desideravi hoc Pascha manducare vobiscum.* Never at any time did he speak more fully of this ineffable Union, which he desir'd to have with them. But it being agreeable to the Majesty of God, to perform the greatest Works in the plainest manner, without setting them forth with a pomp of Words, or declaring the Reasons, or foretelling the Consequences, or removing the Difficulties; that so Man may be humbled, and the Faithful rais'd to the knowledge of this Mystery by the help of Faith; therefore in a wonderful manner he follow'd this Method in the Institution of the Eucharist.

He saw the effects of Grace, which would be wrought in the Hearts of the Faithful by means of this Mystery, and that he was then establishing the greatest help for the Sanctification of Souls. He saw all the Sacrileges and Profanations, with which ill Christians would approach to this holy Banquet, and that the abuse of this Mystery would be the Condemnation of many. And yet he
says

says nothing of all this. He foresaw all the Errors, that would be rais'd against it; and all the attempts of humane Reason to overthrow it; and seems not solicitous to prevent such Evils. 'Twas because he knew, that notwithstanding all these oppositions, he would still propagate the Belief of it throughout the Earth; and judg'd it more becoming himself, to triumph over Humane Reason by plain words supported by the force of Grace, than fence'd by Human and Studied Precautions. Grant, Lord, that the plainness of thy Works and Words, may be no occasion of undervaluing them in our Eyes; but that in this we may confess the Greatness of thy Mysteries, deliver'd to us in a way so unlike to Humane, which being in all things poor and miserable, is ever seeking ways to set forth and magnify all it do's, and itself in all its weakness.

However God has given this liberty to our Faith, to endeavour to penetrate into the Ends of this Mystery; having so order'd it, that Understanding is to be the Recompence of our Belief: *Nisi credideritis, non intelligetis*. This expedient made choice of by Jesus Christ to manifest his Love to Men, and to be a help to their Salvation, is
most

moſt certainly above their Thoughts, and what they are not able to comprehend; but however, it has nothing in it, but what is moſt becoming the Ma-jeſty of God, moſt ſuitable to his infinite Charity, and ſeems directly deſign'd to make us underſtand the End, for which his Only Son became Incarnate. God would be united to Men by a Union ineffable and incomprehenſible, he would be the Beginning of all their Thoughts and of all the Motions of their Hearts, in a manner moſt reſembling that, by which the Word was united to Human Nature. This union he would have effected by Jeſus Chriſt incarnate, and what more lively Idea could he give of this, than by ordaining, that Jeſus made Man, ſhould be united to our Bodies and Souls by means of this Myſtery, and be thus the Pledge and lively Figure of that eternal Union, which God will have with his Eleſt by means of his Son.

By this End of the Inſtitution of the B. Eucharift, may be fram'd a Judgment of their crime, who receive Jeſus Chriſt into a Heart quite empty of the Love of God, and full of the World. For this Myſtery being a Sacrament of the Charity of God towards Man, and of the Union he would have with him, who-

whoever receives it without love, in effect declares to God, that he is not at all mov'd with his infinit love; that he renounces the design of the Incarnation; that he will have no part in it, that his happiness is, in being united by love to Creatures, and not to be united to God. And therefore 'tis not strange, the Apostle declares such an one guilty of profaning the Body and Blood of our Lord, that is to say, of having render'd useless the Sacrifice of his Body and Blood, and made void that Mercy he has shewn in the Eucharist, by which he design'd to unite them to us; 'tis properly to refuse God reigning over us, and prefer his enemy: *Nolumus hunc regnare super nos*; and this it is that makes the enormity of this crime.

Grant, O God, this day we may truly raise our hearts to give praise and thanksgiving for this adorable Mystery: and since thy design in it, was to unite us more perfectly to thy self, let it be now the effect of a new mercy, so to move our hearts, that whenever we approach to it, we may approach with love, and by means of it be so effectually united to thee, that it may not be in the power of Earth or Hell to break those bonds of love, or any more divide us from thee.

N

For

*For this day of the Institution of
the B. Sacrament, it may not be
improper here to add some De-
votions suitable to the Occasion.*

I.

IT was as on this day our B. Redeem-
er, knowing his end drawing near
and that, by death, he was to be
separated from his Children, and soon
after to ascend to his Father, where he
was to abide Glorious for ever, by an
admirable contrivance of his Love, found
means, by which he would still be pre-
sent with them to the end of the World,
by leaving his Body and Blood under
the forms of Bread and Wine, and thus
in a most wonderful, tho' humble, way,
fitting himself to be the daily Comfort
and perpetual Food of our Souls. This
was the effect of thy Love, O Blessed
Redeemer, towards man, that knowing
his weakness, thou might'st be ever
ready to speak to his heart and instruct
him, to warm his breast with thy Char-
ity, and quicken him, to make a heaven
of his Soul, and Sanctify him to thy self.
O God, what return shall I make for
this

this thy infinit mercy? I here prostrate,
adore and praise this thy Goodness, and
in sincere Thanksgiving pour forth my
Soul before thee. But what a poor-re-
turn is this of my Praises for thy mer-
cies! A worm of the earth bowing down
for thy Blessing and Gift of an infinit
value! No, rather let all thy Creatures
both in heaven and earth joyn with me
to bless thy Name; I now call them to
my assistance, to Sing to Thee a Hymn
of Praise.

Our Lord Jesus has given himself to
be our Food for ever.

All you Works of our Lord, bless our
Lord, praise and glorify him for ever.

Angels of our Lord, bless our Lord;
Bless our Lord, you Heavens.

Bless our Lord, you Waters which
are above; all you Powers of our Lord,
Bless our Lord.

Sun and Moon, bless our Lord, bless
our Lord, you Stars of heaven. Ice and
Snow, bless our Lord, bless our Lord,
both Nights and Days. Light and Dark-
ness, bless our Lord: Lightning and
Clouds, bless our Lord. May the Earth
bless our Lord, praise and glorify Him
for ever.

For our Lord Jesus has given himself
to be our Food for ever.

Priests of our Lord, bless our Lord;
N 2 Serv.

Servants of our Lord, bless our Lord.
Spirits and Souls of the Just, bless our
Lord, You Saints and Humble of heart,
bless our Lord.

Let us bless the Father and the Son
and Holy Ghost, let us praise and
glorify him for ever.

Blessed art Thou, O Lord, in the
heavens; Thou art worthy of Praise
and Honour and Glory for ever.

For our Lord Jesus has given himself
to be our Food for ever.

II.

MY Lord and my God, prevent now
my Soul with the blessings of thy
Sweetness, that I may appear in the pre-
sence of this great Mystery, with a de-
votion, suitable to the greatness of that
love, with which it was instituted by
Thee.

Raise up my heart and powerfully
draw it to Thee, and deliver me from
all dulness of Spirit, which too often,
as a weight, keeps down my Soul.

Pour forth thy Saving Grace upon
me, that I may in Spirit, now taste thy
Heavenly Sweetness, the fulness of
which is in a wonderful manner, com-
prehended in this Sacrament.

Enliven

Enlighten my eyes, that I may. with profit, contemplate so great a Mystery: Strengthen my Faith, that I may firmly believe it:

For this Mystery is not the work of human, but of a Power Divine, 'tis not the thought of man, but thy infinit Wisdom, that has ordain'd it.

Wherefore there is no mortal creature, of it self, capable to comprehend its excellence, it being above the understanding even of Angels.

What then can I conceive of a Secret so sublime and Holy; I, who am an unworthy Sinner, and nothing, but dust and ashes!

But I come before Thee, My God, in the simplicity of my heart, with a Faith Sincere and Firm.

I come with respect, and truly believe, Thou art here really present in this Divine Sacrament, Christ Jesus, God and Man.

Which Thou hast instituted, for our good, both of Body and Soul; for the remedy of all our evils.

'Tis by this thou art pleas'd to heal our wounds, moderate our Passions, and weaken those temptations, which assault us.

This is the great Comfort of a Faithful Soul, which being in banishment

here below, with joy considers the infinite treasure he in this possesses; that in all its anguish and distress he can ever have recourse to Thee, and be fill'd with thy Sweetness, which not only refreshes, but raises from death to life.

O Wonderful Goodness, and Condescension of our God, not to be comprehended! That thou being our Lord and our God, whom the Heavens cannot contain, art pleas'd to become the Nourishment of our poor Souls, and employ all the riches of thy Divinity, to supply our Necessities with heavenly goods!

III.

I Praise thee for this thy Goodness, and desire, that thy Name, for this, may be eternally bless'd.

I humble my self in thy Presence, adoring thy infinite Majesty, and confessing my own nothing.

Thou art the Holy of Holies, and I am nothing but Misery and Sin.

Thou vouchsafest to come down to us, who are unworthy to lift up our eyes to Thee.

Thou comest to us, and desirest to abide with us; thou art ever inviting
us

us to this Banquet. and call'st us to eat
of this Bread of Heaven, this Food of
Angels, which is no other but thy Self,
*who art the Bread that cam'st down from
Heaven, and giv'st thy Life for the World.*

This is the excess of thy Love, thus
to become our Nourishment: How
wonderful are thy works, O Lord!
How powerful thy hand! How is thy
Truth incomprehensible!

Rejoice, my Soul, and give thanks
to God, for this his Gift of infinit va-
lue, for this heavenly comfort, thy Re-
deemer has bequeath'd thee, in this
vale of tears.

For as ofren, as thou aproacheſt to
Receive the Body of our Lord, so of-
ten thou reneweſt the work of thy Re-
demption, and partakeſt of the Merits
of Chriſt.

My Soul magnifies my Lord, and my
Spirit rejoices in God my Saviour.

How ought my Heart be inflam'd
with Love, and even break forth into
Tears of Joy!

For that Thou art here truly Preſent
in this Divine Myſtery, tho' hid un-
der the Sacramental Veil.

And this was a neceſſary compliance
with our weakneſs: for if Thou wert
to appear in the Majeſty of Thy Glo-
ry, who could ſtand before Thee!

and

As it is, I truly possess and adore Him, whom the Angels adore in Heaven: I possess Him by the help of Faith, and under a Shadow, whilst they enjoy Him without a Veil, even face to face.

But with this assurance of Faith I am content, and desire to go on by its light, till the Day of eternal brightness begins to appear, and the curtain is drawn, which is betwixt me and my God.

Be thou prais'd, O my God, by all People of the World, by all Tribes and Tongues; may all give Glory to thy Holy Name. *a Kemp.*

IV.

I Will glorify Thee, my God and my King; I will bless thy Name for ever and ever.

I will praise Thee every day, and bless thy Name in all Ages.

Great is our Lord, and worthy of all praise; infinit and incomprehensible is his Greatness.

All ages to come shall praise Thy works, and make known thy Power.

They shall publish the Magnificence of the Glory of thy Holiness, and proclaim thy Wonders.

They

They shall declare the Power of Thy terrible Judgments, and manifest thy Greatness.

They shall honour the Memory of Thy excess of Goodness, and sing forth the praises of thy Justice.

Tender and merciful is our Lord; he is Patient and full of Compassion.

Our Lord is Good to all, and his Mercies are above all his Works.

May all thy works praise Thee, O Lord; may all thy Saints bless Thee.

May they publish the Glory of thy Kingdom; and make known thy Power.

That the Sons of Men may understand thy Power, and the glorious Magnificence of thy Kingdom.

Thy Empire is an Empire of all ages; and thy Kingdom shall have no end.

Our Lord is faithful in all his words, he is holy in all his Works.

Our Lord is the Supporter of all that are weak; and gives courage to all that are dejected.

The eyes of all thy Creatures, O Lord, Look towards thee: and thou giv'st them food in due Season.

Thou open'st thy hand, and fill'st every creature with Blessings.

Our Lord is Just in all his ways; and Holy in all his Works.

Our Lord is near all that call upon Him: All that call upon him in truth.

He'll do the will of all that fear him; he will hear their Prayers and save them.

Our Lord watches over all those that love him: but he destroys the Wicked.

My Tongue shall declare thy praises, O Lord: and let all flesh bless thy Name for ever and ever. *Psal. 144.*

V.

AN D now, Lord, while I here confess the Greatness of thy Power and Goodness; I cannot but lament, and with confusion of Soul here acknowledge my own weakness and unworthiness, who have been so often present at the celebration of these thy Holy Mysteries, but without a true Sense of what was done, and without the Reverence due to thy Majesty: who have, again, so often approach'd to partake of this Divine Food: but, O my God, with how little recollection of Spirit, with how poor a preparation for so great a Guest! All these my Sins return fresh into my mind, now being in thy Presence, and strike it with a certain horror of its own Ingratitude.

But

But however miserable and sinful I have been, Thou art still Good and Merciful and full of Compassion, and ready to forgive all those, who, in the Spirit of Humility, acknowledge their Unworthiness, and with all Sincerity resolve upon Amendment.

Wherefore, Lord, now prostrate in Spirit before Thee, I make my address to that thy infinit Goodness, which mov'd Thee in this humble manner, to condescend to our weakness, and beseech thee to forgive me all those my Sins, by which I have been any ways wanting in my Respect due to this most Venerable Sacrament. I beseech thee to pardon me all my irreverent and indecent Behaviour in time of Mass, while the Priest, thy Minister, has been offering this awful Sacrifice to thy Glory, and I, by my levities have been provoking Thy anger, and given ill Example to my Neighbours: Pardon me likewise my great Sloth and Neglect, in not using Means to come to a true Understanding of this Great Oblation; having so often been present at it, but without a true Sense of what was done, or a due apprehension of thy infinit Love towards us in this Holy Institution. Pardon me all those infinit Distractions, I have either wilfully or negligently admit-

admitted in time of Mass, by which I have wrong'd my Soul, in entertaining it with follies instead of the Wonders of thy Goodness, and lost the opportunity of advancing in thy Love. Pardon me all whatever other oversights or Sins of this kind I have been at any time guilty of, and now shew mercy to thy Servant. But, above all, pardon me my great unworthiness in presuming to receive this Divine Food: How often have I approach'd to thy Table without due preparation, without a true sense of my obligation, with a mind distracted and worldly! How often have I offer'd my Heart, for thy Habitation, which has been yet disorder'd with very great Imperfections, and I fear defil'd with Sins! And then, how have I return'd from this Banquet, to all my weaknesses, and taken no care for thy abiding with me; my turning from thy Table, has been turning from Thee! O God, my Failings in this kind have been without number; and will they not truly be my Judgment and Condemnation, if thy Mercy prevents it not? Turn not therefore from thy Servant in anger, but look on me with the eyes of compassion: I confess my Sins and here lay them all before Thee, and hope in this Day of Mercy, not to depart

depart without thy Blessing: I know thou canst not refuse the Petition of a Contrite heart, a Heart that is sensible of its Offences, and truly desirous to amend: In confidence of this, I now humble my self before Thee, and acknowledging all my Ingratitude and Unworthiness, here in the Words of a True Penitent, I sue for Mercy and Pardon.

VI.

HAve mercy on me, O God, according to thy great mercy.

And according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out my Iniquity.

Wash me yet more from my Iniquity, and cleanse me from my Sin.

Because I know my iniquity, and my Sin is always against me.

To thee only have I sin'd, and done evil before thee; that thou mayst be justified in thy words and overcome when thou art judg'd.

For, behold, I was conceiv'd in iniquities, and in Sins has my Mother conceiv'd me.

For, behold, thou hast lov'd Truth: the uncertain and hidden things of thy Wisdom thou hast made manifest to me.

Thou

Thou shalt sprinkle me with hyssop,
and I shall be cleansed: thou shalt wash me,
and I shall be made whiter than snow.

Thou shalt make me hear joy and
gladness; and the bones, that are
humbled, shall rejoice.

Turn away thy face from my Sins,
and blot out all my Iniquities.

Create a clean Heart in me, O
God; and renew a right Spirit within
my Bowels.

Cast me not away from thy face;
and take not thy holy Spirit from me

Restore to me the joy of thy Salva-
tion; and confirm me with a perfect
Spirit.

I will teach the unjust thy ways; and
the wicked shall be converted to thee.

Deliver me from blood, O God, the
God of my Salvation; and my tongue
shall extol thy Justice.

Thou, O Lord, wilt open my lips;
and my mouth shall declare thy praise.

Because if thou wouldst have had sacri-
fice, verily I had given it: with burnt-
offerings thou wilt not be delighted.

A sacrifice to God is a troubled Spirit:
a contrite and humble Heart, O God;
thou wilt not despise.

According to thy good will, O Lord,
deal favourably with Sion, that the
walls of Jerusalem may be built up.

Then

Then shalt thou accept a sacrifice of Justice, Oblations, and whole burnt-offerings, then shall they lay calves upon thy Altar.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the Beginning, now and ever shall be world without end.
Amen.

VII.

BUT being now desirous of pardon for all these my Sins; I here offer thee, O Eternal Father, this thy beloved Son, in whom thou art well pleased. Let him be my Advocate, who has laid down his Life for the pardon of my Offences. He is the High Priest sprinkled with his own Blood; he is a holy Victim; he is a Lamb without blemish, who being without Sin, took on him our Sins, and by his Sufferings has healed our Wounds. Behold, in him is my Hope, in Christ Jesus, thy Son, my Redeemer. Despise not, I beseech thee, this offering. I make thee, but look on the face of thy Christ, who, for our Salvation became obedient even to the Death of the Cross, and gave himself a Sacrifice for our Transgressions.

gressions. Is not this thy Son, whom thou hast deliver'd up, for the Redemption of us thy Unworthy Servants? Remember, O Lord, it is he, whom, being equal to thee in Glory, thou hast humbled in the participation of our Nature, that we might be partakers of thy Divinity. Have regard therefore to thy Son, and behold that in him, which may move thee to have compassion on me thy Servant; his Wounds are ever open to thee, and thro' them may my wickedness be for ever hid from thee: my corrupt flesh has provok'd thy Anger; let the Flesh of thy Only Son move thee to mercy. Have mercy on me, O Holy, Almighty and Eternal Father, Look on this Spotless Lamb, and thro' his Sufferings and Blood, forgive me, I beseech thee, all my Sins, supply all my Omissions, negligence and defects, and receive me into thy Grace.

And Thou, O Lord Jesus Christ, turn not thy face away from me, nor despise me, O God, my Salvation: Accept the petition of thy Servant, who, for me, didst take upon thee the form of a Servant. Accept me an unworthy Sinner, whose coming was to save Sinners. I have been an infirm and lost Sheep; but since thou cam'st
to

to heal what was wounded and find what was lost, accept me now, O Eternal Shepherd, and establish me in thy flock by thy powerful Grace. Present me to the Eternal Father in virtue of all thy merits, that thro' Thee I may obtain his blessing and favour, vvhich, of my self, I do not deserve. Into thy hands I commend my Spirit, vvho hast redeem'd me, O God of Truth. Thou art my hope, and vvilt restore my inheritance to me.

VIII.

THou art the Good Shepherd, vvho hast given thy life for thy Sheep: I am the unhappy Sheep that vvvas lost: Take me now on thy Shoulders, and restore me to the fold: for vvhat canst thou deny me, vvho hast given thy self for me? Rule and govern me, in this pasture, where thou hast placed me, till I come at length to the pastures of eternal Life. O True Light, vvho enlightn'st every one, that comes into this World, enlighten my eyes, that I sleep not the sleep of Death. O Fire ever burning and ever wasting, behold here thy Servant cold, and tepid; enflame my
Reins

Reins and Heart vvith thy Love : for thou can'st to bring Fire on Earth; and O Lord, cause it novv to burn in me. O King of Heaveu and Earth, Rich in Mercy ; behold I am poor and needy ; Thou know'st, where is my greatest want ; and thou alone canst help me : Help me then, O God, and out of the treasure of thy infinit Goodness, supply all the necessities of my Soul. My Lord and my God ; behold I am thy Servant, Give me understanding, raise my Affection, that I may both know and do thy Will. Thou art the Lamb of God, that tak'st away the Sins of the World, take from me, I beseech thee, whatever is hurtful to me and displeases thee, and give me what thou know'st is acceptable to thee, and profitable for my eternal good. Thou art my Love and my Joy, my God and my All : May the power of thy Love wholly possess my Soul, that I may die to the World, and live to Thee, who for love of me didst die on the Crofs, My God and my All.

And now, Lord, since dust and ashes has presum'd to speak, permit me to add one Petition more in behalf of those unhappy Souls, who living in darkness, know not to praise thy Name ; as likewise of those others, who believe not the won-
ders

ders of thy Goodness in this holy Mystery. Discover thy self to them. I beseech thee, that they may know thy Truths, and give them Faith to believe them. Remove from them whatever Veil is before their eyes, and let thy light shine upon them: let no human weakness exclude them from thy Blessings, but bring all to partake of that Banquet, thou hast appointed for the Food of all, O Lord, encrease thy Flock, for the honour of thy Name, that all Nations being brought into thy Fold, may there tast of thy Sweetness, and be nourished with thy Blessings. May all people come and adore thee: Let none perish, whom thou hast redeem'd with thy precious Blood. In the name of all, I here adore thee: accept, I beseech thee, the poor homage I pay thee. I bow here before thee, and wish all Nations of the earth were here to bless thy Name. Let all the earth bless our Lord, and all Nations sing praises to his Name, because our Lord is good, and his Mercy endures for ever.

Having

Having employ'd a good part of this Day in Devotions due to this holy Mystery of the B. Eucharist: on Thursday in the Evening the Church calls us again to the consideration of Christ's Passion; and this ought to be the Subject of our Thoughts for what remains of this Day, as likewise for the Night following.

Devotions of the Passion.

BEing now to enter into the Thoughts of thy Passion, give me Grace, Dear Jesus, that I may perform this Devotion with a true sense of thy Sufferings, with a gratitude due to the Greatness of thy Love, and with such an interior change of my Soul, that from henceforth I may never be at peace with thy Enemies, or take part with them in adding to thy Sufferings by my Sins. Stand by me now, my Lord, and quicken all the Powers of my Soul, that in thy Wounds I may see the true measure of thy Charity, to adore it, and of my Offences, for ever to detest them.

Agony.

Agony of Christ in the Garden.

IT was as on this Night my Redeemer went into the Garden of *Getsemani*, where having a lively sense of all the Cruelties he was now to suffer, he cry'd out: *My Soul is sad even to Death*; and then falling prostrate on his face, Thus rais'd up his Voice to his Eterhal Father: *Father, if it be possible, let this Cup pass from me: but not my Will, but thine be done.* Here it was that inward Conflict of his Soul broke forth into streams of Blood; and he became so truly oppress'd, from the great repugnance Nature had to suffer, that he even admitted of an Angel's comfort. Great was the Humility of our Lord, to accept relief from his own Creature. But however, amidst all his anguish he wholly resigns all to his Father's Will: *Not my Will, but thine be done.*

O merciful Jesu, I adore and bless thee for this thy Agony, for all thy Fears and Sadness, for thy Sighs and Tears and bloody Sweat, for all thou suffer'dst in the Garden; I give thee thanks for these wonderful effects of thy Love to Man; and beseech thee, by this thy infinit Charity, that whenever tribulation

bulation or anguish shall assault me, I may receive it with a Humility like to thine, and with a true submission to thy Father's Will: but especially, O Lord, remember me at my last hour, when the terrors of death shall begin to seize me; then let thy Angels comfort me, then let the memory of thy Sufferings support me against all apprehensions, that no fears of Death or Judgment may ever lessen the Hope I ought to repose in thee. In the mean time, moderate, I beseech thee, by thy Holy Spirit, all my Grievs and Joys, that no excess of either Passion may ever remove thee out of my sight. Let not my chief comfort be Worldly, but in the testimony of a good Conscience, in the accomplishment of thy Will: and for my troubles, whatever this World may bring me, let that still be my greatest, whereby I lament my sins and grieve for having offended thee.

He's taken Prisoner and carried before Annas.

Sweet Jesus, who am I, that thou being Almighty and Everlasting God, should'st offer thy self to Torments and Death for me, who deserv'd no Mercy, but

but Justice; and for my sins to be for ever banish'd from the sight of Happiness! But thus it pleas'd thee; and therefore thou gavest thy self a prey to thy malicious enemies, that came to seek thee: they were struck down by the power of one word, to shew their weakness; and yet thou wast taken Prisoner by them, to manifest thy Choice and Goodness. Here a Traytor is admitted to kiss thee, and notwithstanding all his Treachery and Ingratitude, is receiv'd with Meekness and Peace. I adore and praise thee, and give thee thanks for this thy Humility, Meekness and Charity, and all those other Virtues practis'd for my example, whilst thou wast in the hands of that insulting Multitude; whilst they seiz'd and dragg'd thee along amidst Reproaches, Indignities and Blasphemies, till, like a meek Lamb amongst Wolves, thou wast brought before Anna, where a vile servant reproves thee, and, in contempt, strikes thee on the Face. And here thou hast that addition to thy grief, to see thy self wholly abandon'd by thy Disciples, and left by them to the merciless rage of thy enemies.

O merciful Jesu, I beseech thee, by all thou then suffer'dst, to have compassion on me, and deliver me from all the bonds of sin; my life is a kind of slavery

slavery under thy enemies; the Devil, the World and the Flesh have fasten'd their Chains upon me, and under their Tyranny I am dragg'd along, even to such things, as my Soul abhors. In how many particulars, does a weak compliance with the World, draw me out of the ways of thy Gospel? What violences do I suffer from ill customs, and how does my interior corruption push me forward to the contempt of thy Law? Look therefore and have mercy on me, O Jesus; overthrow all my enemies by the power of thy Word, and force them to give way. Deliver me from the captivity of sin; and break all those bonds asunder, which do violence to my Soul. may those bonds, which tie thy innocent hands, obtain for me a true liberty, that being disingag'd from all sinful or worldly ties, my Soul may delight in thy Commandments and seek no other rest, but in thee.

Jesus in the House of Caiphas.

From *Annas*, my Redeemer is still hurried on to the House of *Caiphas*, the High-Priest of that year; Here false Accusations are press'd against him, all which he hears in silence; here he's con-

condemn'd of Blasphemy, and here thrice denied by *Peter*. 'Twas here, the Judge retiring, he's left all night amongst the Souldiers: and who can imagine the half part of what he suffer'd from their inhuman cruelty? He is buffeted, and spit on, till he is wholly disfigur'd, and left without shape or form: he is made the object of their scorn, become the most contemptible of Men, and reputed as a Worm of the Earth.

O Jesu, I adore, praise and give thee thanks for all the indignities offer'd thee in this night of darkness; I admire thy Patience, love thy Charity, and beseech thee so to imprint the remembrance of this night in my Soul, that amidst all reproaches, injuries, calumnies, and contempts, thy Meekness and Silence being ever before my Eyes, my Passions may be moderated, and it may seem to me rather a happiness, than misfortune to have a share in these Trials, which thou hast sanctified in thy Person, and shewn us, how much they are to be valued, which being avoided by the World, as evils, are yet the seeds of everlasting Bliss. Grant, that in no streights I may ever deny thee, and whenever, through infirmity, I fall, raise me again by the speedy succors of thy Grace; that knowing my self in my weakness, I may
O like-

likewise have a true knowledge of thee in the experience of thy untir'd goodness.

He's carried to Pilate and Herod.

THUS disfigur'd with the Soldiers Cruelty, He's early in the morning carried to *Pilate*, and there stands bound before a petty Governor; he's accus'd again by his own People, of Blasphemy and Sedition, and bears all the attempts of their Malice in a peaceful silence. Thence he's sent to *Herod*, who for the hopes of seeing some Miracle, soon gives him audience, hears all his Crimes, but hearing no defence, condemns this Meekness for insensibility; and sends him back to *Pilate*, cloath'd in a white Garment, the sign of his Contempt.

O ye Cherubims of Heaven, behold the Eternal Wisdom of God, cloath'd in a Fools Coat; come and adore your Lord in this Livery of Scorn: and thou, my Soul, enter in with this company, and prostrate before thy Sovereign, the more contemptible he is, the more he deserves thy Gratitude and Love: if thou canst not behold him amidst the splendors of his Glory, look on him now at least, when

when all his Majesty being hid, there appears nothing but Mockery and Contempt; and let not thy adoration be the less, because thou seest him humbled; 'tis for thy sake he's so. Thank him for what he suffers; and whenever it comes to thy share to be contemn'd; remember, however disrelishing it may be to Nature and Self-Love, 'tis what thy Redeemer chose; and if thou pretend'st to be his Disciple; Is the Disciple to be above the Master? If they have call'd him Belzebub; how much more those of his Household?

Jesus is brought back to Pilate, and Barabbas preferr'd before him.

WITH this ignominious Title and Livery of publick Scorn, Jesus is sent back to *Pilate*, who finding no cause deserving Punishment or Death, endeavour'd to release him; offering, upon the Peoples demand, to give him a discharge: but they having little regard to Innocence or Justice, and overrul'd by the malice of their Priests, made their Petition in favour of *Barabbas*; desiring Murder and Sedition to be set at liberty, and Jesus to be Crucified.

O Jesus, mercifully preserve me, I beseech thee, from such Obstinacy and Blindness. I see here, what are the effects of violent Passion, and that when the heart is once possess'd, and ulcerated with this evil, it turns all into corruption; there never want pretexts, to trample on all that's Good, and persecute Virtue, as if it were truly Vice. A passionate and corrupt mind is a fruitful source of all injustice, and the most unreasonable disorders: deliver me from this evil of the Pharisees, O Lord; and from the weakness too of the people, that I may never yield to what is sinful and unjust, upon the solicitation of others: that love for virtue, I know, is too feeble, which only then keeps within the bounds of Duty, when it has no encouragement to transgress them. And yet how often do I miserably fall into this Weakness, nay into this Blindness too; whilst turning but with a passing glance on my past life, I see there the many times I have preferr'd thy Creatures, the World, my Satisfaction or Interest before Thee, O Lord, I have chosen *Barabbas*, and abandon'd Jesus! I have fallen into the crime of the Jews; and have now greater reason to condemn my own Treachery and Ingratitude, than their wickedness. They knew not what they

they did ; but I have no such plea. But however I have still thy goodness to appeal to. 'Tis there I now make my address: and tho' my sins are without number, yet I have a confidence in the sufferings of my Redeemer, and hope, through them to obtain mercy, of which, of my self, I confess I am altogether unworthy.

He's Scourg'd at the Pillar.

Pilate still continues his endeavours to deliver Jesus from the malice of the Jews, and therefore commands him to be tied to a Pillar, and to be there scourg'd in the sight of his enemies, hoping with this punishment of a Slave, to satisfy their Rage, and thus take him out of their hands.

Most dear Redeemer, whilst I behold thee at the Pillar, there expos'd to confusion and left to the mercy of those cruel Executioners, I see there the immensity of thy Love for us, and greatness of our sins against thee. I see there the slavery, into which we were degraded; and in thy Wounds, the punishment due to our crimes. 'Tis we that had offended, and thou suffer'st for our transgressions; my sins bind thy hands, and

every stroke thou receivest, is the effect of my iniquities; so that 'tis I that drag thee, and not the Jews, to that Pillar of punishment and shame. Hold therefore you Executioners of Justice; 'tis I that have sin'd and done wickedly; punish not Innocence, but let the Guilty suffer. Thus the knowledge of my sins make me cry out: but thou, O God of infinite mercy, giv'st contrary orders; Thou say'st from above; punish the Innocent, that those, who are Guilty, may be at liberty, and escape the rigor of Justice. Blessed, O Lord, be this thy goodness to sinful worms; and blessed for ever be thy Name, O Jesus; I adore thee and praise thee for this thy Mercy. I will ever remember these Bonds, these Scourges at the Pillar; I thank thee for what thou here sufferedst; I wish I could here mix with thy sacred blood some tears of hearty Contrition, that so I might obtain pardon of all my sins; Thy Wounds cry out for Mercy; Mercy, then O God of Goodness, Have mercy on me.

Jesus

*Jesus is Crown'd with Thorns and a
Scepter of a Reed put in his Hands.*

THE Soldiers not content with this Cruelty, out-go their Orders, and twisting a wreath of Thorns, fix it on his sacred Head; and having put a mock Scepter of a Reed into his Hands, they then in scorn, bow down before him, and in contempt salute him thus; *Hail King of the Jews.*

And thou, my Soul, canst thou now stand still and view thy Lord amidst this Rabble! Run rather in, and prostrate before thy Saviour, give him the Honour due to him. Whilst they in scorn, do thou with all possible reverence, adore him for thy God, no less in Pilat's Hall, than above in Glory. Call in the Angels to thy assistance and joyning in one Choir, salute him in the highest strain, Hail King of Earth and Heaven. But whilst thou seest his Head pierced with Thorns, think something of that interior grief, which pierc'd his Soul, arising not only from the contradiction, he then suffer'd, of the unbelieving Jews, but likewise from all sinners, which is here signified by the Crown he wears. And whilst thou reflectst on this, re-

solve with patience, and even without complaint, to submit, not only to outward troubles, but also all interior pains, which often are a rack upon the Spirits; to all Darknes, Dryness, Uncertainties and Doubts: and having consulted those alone, whose advice is necessary for thy direction, then cast thy self at the feet of Jesus Crown'd with Thorns, and there acknowledge, 'tis just thou should'st be interiorly afflicted, who hast so often made such ill use of thy Heart and Thoughts. Think 'twas one part of thy coming into this World, to suffer the contradiction of Men; to be disquieted with the uncertainties of thy own thoughts, and that thy only remedy of these disorders, is, to keep close to Jesus, who was pleas'd to be Crown'd with Thorns, to teach thee thus to suffer. O Jesus, whenever I feel these Thorns, grant I may then remember thine, and from thy Patience learn, without murmuring, to submit to all disquiets.

Ecce Homo. Behold the Man.

Pilate still makes another attempt in favour of persecuted Innocence; and therefore cover'd as he was with Wounds

Wounds and Blood, and under all these ensigns of Conrempt, shews him from some eminent place to the Cruel Multitude: Saying, *Ecce Homo: Behold the Man*, hoping by such an Object of Misery, to soften their Hearts, and abate their Fury. but they still unmoved, and obstinate in their Wickedness, cry out; *Crucify, Crucify, Crucify him, Crucify him.*

O Dreadful consequence of a Passion once conceiv'd! 'Tis much easier prevented, than moderated; No body knows the effects of one ill Action, and what variety of Evils are often the growth and punishment of one. O Jesus, the Jews receive no benefit from the sight of thy torments; and if I, now in this holy Time, Contemplating thy Sufferings, continue still unreformed, what am I but even a Jew, like them, insensible and stony! Preserve me, O Jesus, from this Obduratness: and by this affliction, into which thy Love for me has brought thee; give me grace and strength to amend. And thou O Eternal Father, *Ecce Homo; Behold the Man*: See thy disfigur'd Son; See what extremity of Evils he has suffer'd for my sake, that from Head to Foot he is but one Wound; Consider the infinite merits of his Passion; and then I

hope thou wilt look on me with mercy.

Jesus is Condemn'd, and carries his Cross,

Pilate confesses the Innocence of Jesus, and yet in a weak compliance, and for fear of losing *Cæsar's* favour, pronounces Sentence of Death against him, and delivers him up to the Jews and Gentils to be Crucified: forthwith a heavy Cross is laid on his Shoulders, and under that Weight he goes towards Mount Calvary, till unable to move farther, *Simon the Cyrenæan* is commanded to assist him.

I adore thy infinit Love, O God, in delivering thy Son to Death for us: and I thank thee, Dear Jesus, for thy infinite Charity in accepting of this Death and voluntary Offering thy self to Suffer for our Redemption. But then those Sins I here most heartily detest, which are the cause of thy Sufferings; those of all ages past, present and to come, and mine in particular; for all these concur to thy Condemnation, whilst thou offer'st thy self a Sacrifice for all, and none can be expiated, but by thy Death. 'Tis then the weight of these

these, more than of thy Cross, that bears thee down, the weight of our Sins are thy oppression; Grant, O Jesus, I may never add more to thy Burthen.

But Thou go'st on towards Death with thy Cross: and in this I see, what ought to be the method of my Life, if it be truly Christian. I must voluntarily accept my Cross, and carry it with Peace and Patience; not only submitting to such Evils, thy Hand shall lay upon me; but likewise in depriving my self of many Creatures, of which my Sins have render'd me unworthy, and my Corrupt Nature makes dangerous to me: as also in suffering such mortifications, as are necessary for preventing in me the encrease of Sin, or satisfying the Divine Justice for what I have already committed. That Death likewise to which I am hastning, I must consider as a Punishment, to which I am justly condemn'd, which Thou, my God, wilt however accept from me, as a Sacrifice for Sin, if I humbly submit to it, as the effect of thy Justice, and as due to my Offences. In union then with that Sacrifice my Redeemer offer'd thee on the Cross, I accept the Sentence of Death, in whatever manner I am to suffer it, and all other

other evils ; and now offer them to thy Divine Majesty.

But which of all these can I suffer, except thou takest part with me and help'st to bear my Cross ? Of my self I am weak and wholly unable to go thro' with patience. Help me then, Dear Jesus, help me to bear my Cross ; Comfort me in all my Sufferings, and ever support my Soul, that it sink not under the weight. Whatever uneasiness I find, I'll ever look on Thee : I'll remember thy Voice where thou commandest ; *Take up thy Cross and follow me.*

Good-Friday.

Jesus is Crucified.

BEing thus arriv'd at Mount Calvary, Jesus is forthwith stretch'd out upon the Cross ; his Hands and Feet are pierc'd with Nails, and with them fastn'd to the Wood ; and thus, with Shouts and Cries of the insulting Multitude, he's rais'd up into the Air ; and in this manner he offers himself a bleeding Sacrifice to the Eternal Father, a Propitiation for our Sins, and those of the whole World.

And

And thou, my Soul, what wilt thou now do? Stand a while and wonder at the prodigious Mercy of thy God. See and believe; He that is become thus miserable, expos'd to Publick Shame, reproach'd by all, now bleeding and tormented in every Part, is God, the Son of God made Man for thee; for thee and for thy Sins. Stand then no longer, but run in to thy Suffering Lord, and at his Feet pour forth thy Soul in all the extasies of Love and Praise.

I adore thee, O Jesus, for this thy infinit Love; for that thou art pleas'd to suffer all these Torments for my Sins. O ye holy Spirits above, Come and adore your Lord, and praise him for ever: He has humbled himself to the Death of the Cross, for us, poor, ungrateful Worms; to redeem us from all the dismal effects of Sin, and reconcile us again to his Eternal Father: 'Tis my God that suffers, that a poor Worm may be happy; 'tis my God that suffers, that he may redeem a Slave. Blessed be this thy Goodness, O Jesus; and now vouchsafe to extend thy Mercy to this poor, miserable and unworthy Sinner before thee. I confess, my Sins have helpt to open those Wounds, which are flowing with Blood; my Wickedness and Ingratitude wound thee

thee deeper, than those Nails, which pierce thy Hands and Feet. But however, so has thy Goodness order'd it; as thy Torments and Suffering are the effects, so are they likewise the Remedy of Sin. And therefore, tho' my Wickedness is a sufficient terror to me, casting me even to the brink of Despair; yet, when I consider thy Passion, and behold thee, my Redeemer, bleeding for my iniquity, and by an opprobrious and cruel Death, paying the debt due to the Divine Justice, this raises up my Spirits again, and lays the Foundation of such solid hopes, that truly I have Comfort and Mercy before my Eye, and I can never more distrust of thy Goodness.

Behold then, Dear Jesus, I cast myself at the foot of thy Cross; I bring with me all the Sins of my Life, and laying them before thee, I there declare against them, as thy Enemies and mine; I beseech thee to grant me a true and sincere Contrition, that I may faithfully forsake them; and with a firm Confidence I cry out; Wash me from all my iniquities, and cleanse me from my sins; let those sacred Streams, which flow from those Fountains of Life, purify me from all my wickedness; let them search into the secrets of

of

of my Heart, and leave no disorder there.

O Jesus Christ, my only Redeemer, let not the fruit of thy Passion be lost on me. I beseech thee, by thy ignominious Death and pierced Heart, Grant me now pardon of my Sins, and preserve me in thy Grace, both now and in the hour of my Death. *Amen.*

O Crucified Jesus, Saviour of the World, let all thy Torments and precious Blood plead for my Soul, and secure me against the severity of thy Judgments. *Amen.*

Jesu, the Good Shepherd, who with thy Blood feedest and healest thy Sheep; Grant, that the effusion of thy Blood, be to me a Comfort and the remedy of all my Sins. *Amen.*

Innocent Lamb of God, who tak'st away the Sins of the World, I beseech thee by all thy Pains and interior Anguish of thy Heart, spare me, and shew mercy to me in the Day of Judgment. *Amen.*

Jesu, obedient Son to God the Father, who so willingly submittedst to drink the bitter Cup of thy Passion, and in thy Thirst, hadst Gall and Vinegar given to refresh thee; Grant, by all thy Sufferings, I may be ever Humble and Patient in all Troubles,
and

and obedient to the Eternal Father, even to Death. *Amen.*

Jesu, the High Priest, who offeredst to God the Father a Sacrifice without spot or blemish, for the making our peace with Heaven; Grant, by the infinit Merits of thy Passion and Death, I may die to the World and live to thee alone, and whenever I am to go hence, that I may depart in thy peace. *Amen.*

Jesu of Nazareth, King of the Jews, by thy Victory on the Cross, over all thy Enemies, defend me, I beseech thee, from all mine: deliver me, from all dangers of Soul and Body: Grant peace and unity to thy Church; Rest to the Faithful departed; to Sinners true Repentance and Pardon; and Grace, and Mercy to all. *Amen.*

Jesu, my Dear Saviour, the Faithful Shepherd of my Soul, have compassion on this Sheep, that has gone astray and run from thee. Open to me thy Heart and Sacred Wounds, that in them I may hide my self from the anger of my offended God, be protected and purified. Crucify in me my Flesh with all its Vices and Concupiscences. Extinguish in me all Pride and Self-love, and whatever other ill Affections there be, that disorder my Soul. Renew

a right Spirit within my Bowels: Strengthen in me my good Desires, that I may readily perform my Duty, that I may sincerely love thee, and faithfully serve thee; that I may never Glory but in thy Cross, O Lord Jesus Christ; that the World may be crucified to me and I to the World. Thou hast said, When thou art lifted up from the Earth, thou wilt draw all things to thy Self: Draw me then now to thee, O dear Redeemer, and let there be nothing, that shall any more separate me from thee.

And Thou, O Eternal Father, look on the face of thy Christ; accept this Sacrifice he now offers thee on the Cross; let that Anguish of his Soul, those Torments in his Body, that Blood, which he sheds, that Death he suffers, be the Propitiation for my Sins: It was for these he makes this Offering to Thee; and, O God; let not all this be lost on me.

Having

*Having thus put up thy Petitions,
Sit still a while at the foot of the
Cross, and there learn some
Lessons thy Suffering Redeemer
teaches thee.*

I. **L**earn what Sin is: Thou generally framest some weak Idea of it; but far short of that horror, which truly belongs to it. Look now on thy Dying Lord, and see with what severity God punishes it in his Only Son, who undertook to Satisfie for the Sins of Men. 'Tis his Life alone, more valuable than a thousand Worlds, is the only Sacrifice capable of Satisfying for Sin. And yet how blind are Men, so easily to run into it, drinking down Iniquity like Water! Must not they one day, by this Means, pull on their Heads the weight of God's Justice? Lay thou hold of this Remedy before thee, and Sin no more.

II. Learn what is the demerit of Man in the state of sin, and what obligation his guilt brings on him. Jesus Christ is depriv'd of all things of this World;
to

to shew, that a sinner has lost all right to the enjoyment or possession of Creatures; and that when he is deprived of them, he is then in that state, which is justly his due. Jesus Christ on the Cross is in a state of ignominy, expos'd to the reproaches of the insulting Jews and Pagans, trampled on, even so as to be thrust into the lowest rank of Men, which is that of Slaves. This is to shew us, that in as much as we are sinners, there's no sort of contempt, which is not justly our due, for our rebellion against our God: So that all we can suffer in this kind, is infinitely less than we deserve. 'Tis to shew us, that the undue enjoyment of Creatures, and desire of unlawful pleasures, deserve not only to be punish'd with the privation of them, but likewise with pain and torments: that these are truly the portion of sinners: and tho' our Redeemer was pleased to take this part on himself, 'twas not to exempt us from all suffering in this World; but to deliver us from pains everlasting, the greatness of which ought to make us regard all that as inconsiderable, which God has left us to suffer, which is only Temporal.

III. Learn, not only, that what thou seest Christ suffer, is due to thee; that the love of Justice ought to make thee love

love the privation of Creatures, to love ignominy and pain : but likewise, that in these three particulars, so contrary to our inclination, consists the true remedy of our sins. Our evil consists in our immoderate love and adhesion to Creatures : The remedy is to deprive our selves of them, and bring our selves, as near as may be, to that forsaken state of Christ Crucified. Our evil consists in the love of pleasure ; Christ Crucified shews us the remedy to be in painful mortification. Our evil consists, in seeking Honours or vain esteem of Men : the remedy is in patiently suffering reproaches and contempts. Thus, tho' the Lessons of the Cross seem hard to us, yet they are instructions for the cure of all our sins, and so much the more willingly to be receiv'd, as far as the remedies prescrib'd are only short and passing, and yet are remedies for the preventing of everlasting evils. The short depriving our selves of Creatures, is the remedy against that eternal poverty and separation, to which the damned shall be reduc'd. Passing Mortification, the remedy of eternal pains ; and momentary contempts prevent that Confusion of the Reprobate, which shall never end. In this manner in the Cross, is the remedy of our present evils and those

those to come; and if it seems difficult to our Passions, which are to be cured; let the consideration of the evils, which otherwise wait for us, recommend it to our practice, in rendering it more easie.

IV. Learn from the Cross the true disposition, in which thy Soul ought to be: not only in esteeming the privation of pleasures and honours, a much more valuable Christian good, than the enjoyment of them: but likewise to contemn and have a horror for a Worldly life, which is ever searching after these goods, and apprehends no satisfaction, but in possessing them. Whatever evils therefore fall to thy share. thou ought'st still to look on thy self a thousand times more happy than those, who are in the quiet enjoyment of their Pride, Luxury and Delights: what the World values, as the greatest happiness, thou ought'st to consider, as the greatest misfortune. And this thou art to learn at the foot of the Cross.

V. Learn, that Christ on the Cross is not conquer'd by his enemies, but that even there is the field of his Victory and Triumphs: there he overcomes the Devil and the World: but learn too, wherein consists the victory of a Christian. The victory of Jesus Christ is wholly invisible; there appears nothing
to

to sense, but one oppress'd under the malice of his enemies. A Christian then is not to desire any visible effects of his victory, or that God should grant him any remarkable advantages over his Adversaries. His Triumph is in suffering to death, under all attempts whatever. This is the victory of Faith, not less real, because invisible; 'tis this which belongs to all the Elect, of whom the Apostle speaks: every one, that is born of God, overcomes the World, and this is the victory, that overcomes the World, our Faith.

VI. Learn, what manner of love thou ow'st to God: 'tis such a love, as obliges thee to prefer his Glory and Interest before all things, and surrender thy life with joy in defence of his Truth and his Honour. This is the Lesson Jesus Christ practices on the Cross. He gives his life for the confession of the Truth, after he had maintain'd it before *Pilate* and the Jews, he seals with his blood the Doctrine he had Preach'd, and thus becomes the Head and King of all Martyrs.

VII. Learn, what manner of love thou ow'st thy Neighbour: for 'tis for Men Christ gives up his life; to rescue them from the power of Hell, and open Heaven for them: he dies, not only for his

his Friends and Just, but also for sinners and enemies of God, to make their Peace, and obtain Grace for rendring them again the Friends of God. Thus extensive ought thy Charity to be, not confin'd by human respect, but wholly without reserve. Consider too, what thy Patience ought to be in this point: Jesus on the Cross suffers the reproaches of the insulting Jews; and their cruelty provokes him not: he looks on their crimes on the most favourable side, as the effects of their ignorance, and not their malice. His thoughts are compassionate, and his words peaceable: *Father, forgive them, they know not what they do.* See here the highest degree of patience taught thee by Jesus Christ.

VIII. Learn the great Duty of offering Sacrifice to God. which Christ do's on the Cross, and there providing for our Salvation, gives us opportunity of offering our selves with him. Man, as a Creature, was ever oblig'd to offer Sacrifice to God: and instead of those Spiritual Sacrifices, offer'd by him in the state of Innocence; his duty, as a sinner, was to offer to him his very life, in some recompence for the offence committed against the infinit Majesty of God. But that sin, which brought this obligation on him, render'd him at the same

same time incapable of performing it. The Sacrifice due to God, was for the expiation of sin, and ought to have been a Victim pure, without spot or blemish: now he himself was very unqualified for becoming such a Sacrifice, being defil'd, corrupted and infinitely disproportion'd to the greatness of the offence, that had been committed. He was oblig'd then to an impossibility; and 'twas in vain to substitute in his place the blood of Beasts, with which God would not be satisfied. But however what was thus impossible to Men and even to Angels, the Son of God made possible by substituting himself instead of all other Sacrifices, and offering to his Father, his Life, which was of an infinit Price, for the expiation and satisfaction of sin. Thus, the Cross is not only the instrument of Christ's suffering; but likewise the Altar of his Sacrifice. 'Tis there he offers the Victim of his Body, that he may continually offer it to God for all eternity: and 'tis by this holy means, infinitely surpassing all the thoughts of Men, he gives them an expedient, whereby to discharge those duties, which otherwise, were altogether impossible to them, that is, of offering their lives to God, and making him a Sacrifice of Expiation, — capable of satisfi-
satisfying

tisfying for sin. For Jesus Christ choosing them for his Brethren, admits them likewise into part of his Priesthood, giving them right of making an Offering of Him, and joyning to it the Sacrifice of their own lives, which, of themselves, being unworthy of being presented to God, become worthy and acceptable, by being joyn'd to the Sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This Devotion, thus learnt from the Cross, we ought daily to practise, offering our selves to God, in union with Christ, and begging Grace, at our last hour, to consummate this Sacrifice, in union with his.

Jesus expires on the Cross.

EVERY Action of Christ was of infinit value, sufficient to satisfy the Divine Justice and redeem Man: and yet not sufficient, according to the design of God's infinit Wisdom, who being willing to evidence the greatness of his Mercy and Love to Men, and give them a full instruction in their Duty, was pleas'd for a more plentiful Redemption, that he should die for them. His Death then was the end of his coming into the World, and 'tis to this we must acknowledge the benefit of our Redemption.

P

God

God gave him to us, that he might die for us. What then ought we not to do for him? What effects ought his death have on every part of our lives? And yet how much wanting is the greatest part of the World, in satisfying this obligation? What part has Jesus Christ in the conduct of their lives? What place has he in their Hearts and Thoughts? Certainly there is something so surprising in this stupidity and ingratitude of Men, in regard of this infinit mercy, that 'tis not less wonderful than that Charity or Love of Jesus Christ, which mov'd him to undertake it. for our Salvation. O God, if thy powerful Grace softens not this hardness of our hearts; if thou render'st us not more sensible of this thy infinit Love; thy Death, I fear, will be the Condemnation, and not the remedy of our Ingratitude, and Corruption of our Hearts.

Jesus Christ then expir'd on the Cross; but not till he had fully accomplish'd the work enjoin'd him by his Father. *Consummatum est*. All was finish'd, nothing left imperfect, that was recommended to us. This is a Rule, we ought ever to have before our eyes; and yet, however necessary, 'tis little thought on. The greatest part of Men at the hour of death, have little of that done, for which

which they came into the World, and for which their life was given them. The end of their coming here, was to seek the cure of their infirmities, to work out their Salvation, and lay up treasures in Heaven; and all this is the least part of their concern. The far greater number of Men stand in need of being admitted then to begin their lives again, when they have made an end of living. But this is not granted; once the time is past, there is then no more time. God then says to us, tho' in a different sense, *Consummatum est*. All is finish'd: your time is at an end; that which now is not done, must for ever be left undone; let us therefore adore in Christ this accomplishment of his work before the hour of death, and beseech him, to grant us grace for the finishing ours.

Jesus Christ having given up the Ghost, 'twas a terrifying surprise to the Devils, who had push'd on the Jews to thirst after the blood of Christ, to see him, from the moment of his death, victorious and triumphing over them; to see their Empire destroy'd, and that they must for ever be subject to him as to their Master, their Judge and their God. The surprise of a sinful unrepenting Soul, at the hour of death, will not be

less, when having neglected all the lights of God's grace in time of health, and abus'd all the effects of Christ's death, it shall then behold Christ, whom it had despis'd and forgotten; and be convinc'd, that then there's no remedy left; that the grace formerly offer'd, shall for ever be refus'd; that it shall have no other portion for Eternity, than to suffer the rigorous Justice of God, whose mercy it had so long despis'd.

Grant, O merciful Jesus, that my Soul may never perish, for which thou hast laid down thy life: may thy Death be life to me, that, by it, I may obtain such effectual grace, as to forsake all sin, the cause of thy suffering, and in all things be obedient to Thee, O Jesus, make me a faithful Disciple of the Cross, that I may sincerely practise, what thou hast there taught me, that I be ever Meek, Humble, Patient and Resign'd, and in all my actions shew, whose Disciple I am, O Jesus, be to me a Jesus and save me.

Saturday.

Saturday.

He descended into Hell.

THE Saviour of the World having expir'd on the Cross, and by his death paid the ransom due to the Divine Justice for the sins of Men, descended into the infernal Prison, to deliver thence those just Souls, who were waiting for their Redeemer, and were in a condition of entring with him into Glory. 'Tis easie imagining here, what rage possesses'd the Devils at this unexpected delivery, to see such numbers of Pious Souls, who till then, had, like them, been banish'd Heaven, now rescu'd from their Captivity, and summon'd to prepare for a triumphant entry into Heaven; whilst they knew their Sentence to be irreverfible, and their doom to misery to be eternal. But if their envious fury was inexpressible, so likewise was the Joy of those Holy Souls at the sight of their Redeemer; who having conquer'd Death and Hell, came now with the happy Character of a Deliverer, and demanded them, from their long confinement, now to take part in his triumphs. 'Twas

the Meſias they expected, and being come, they think all the time of their baniſhment to have been as nothing, beginning now to enjoy him, whom they had ſo long deſir'd, and whom no time could ever more take from them: their tears are now dried up, their ſighs chang'd into Hoſanna's, their mourning into joy, and no thoughts of their Captivity remain on their Spirits. This ſame will be the happineſs of every Soul, that dies well: whether the Evils and afflictions of life have been great or little, long or ſhort, they all diſappear at the hour of a happy death, and are loſt in eternity. There will be no ſenſe then of all thoſe inconfiderable accidents, which appear now ſo terrifying to us: and 'tis this only expedient of Imprinting a lively Idea of Eternity in our hearts, that can take off the horror of all temporal evils, and render them equally deſirable with Comforts. Once death approaches, and Chriſt our Redeemer welcomes a Juſt Soul out of the imprisonment of the Body, all its concern is at an end, and then paſt afflictions only ſerve to add to the ſatisfaction of its delivery and reſt. And where this hope do's not ſweeten ſomething, or at leaſt moderate here, all exceſs of diſturbance and grief, 'tis to be fear'd, ſuch a Soul
looks

looks not beyond Time, but has its portion here only in the conveniencies of this Life. Thus welcome then was Christ to the Souls of the Holy Fathers, tho' not so to the Reprobate; the Comfort of the former was in these the encrease of their Despair. And is it not a strange misfortune and most surprizing blindness of Men, to put themselves into such a state, that the victories of Christ, should add to their misery; and the encrease of his Glory be their greater confusion? But thus it must necessarily be with sinners: for in beholding the excess of Christ's suffering, they see there such an Abyss of Love and Mercy, so great a desire of their Salvation, that this necessarily lays before them a full prospect of their own Ingratitude and Blindness, revives in them the thoughts of all the opportunities they have lost, and of the inconsiderableness of those trifles, for which they lost them; and the consequence of this is rage and despair. And thus it will one day be with all perverse and impenitent sinners; Death will present them before their Lord, and beholding him, whose love and mercy they had so ungratefully despis'd, they'll need no other Executioner, besides that of their own Consciences, to put them on the rack, and confound them with a certain

horror, which, their state being unalterable, must last for eternity.

Thus was Christ a Blessing to some and a Confusion to others: of one of these two ranks must we all be: and this determination entirely depends on that little space of life, while we are on the Earth. He that has not lov'd and serv'd Jesus Christ in time of this life, shall not love him for ever: and he that has lov'd here, shall love him for all eternity: all our happiness consists in obeying God in this life, and every thing besides, is vain and unprofitable. 'Tis in this point we must make our enquiry; and remember, the Service and Love of Christ appears in our Thoughts, in our Desires and our Actions. He that loves, thinks of what he loves: he that loves, is concern'd in whatever happens to his Beloved: he is afflicted at his misfortunes, rejoices at his success: he resents all injuries offer'd him, is zealous for his Glory, acts for him, directs the body of actions to him, and avoids every thing, he knows displeasing to him. By this we may judge whether we love Christ, or no; and on this Love may be fram'd the best judgment, as to our eternal lot.

O Jesus, thou know'st all the Miseries, to which I am subject, all the
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Sins of my Life, and the war, wherein I am at present engag'd with my corruption. I beseech thee, by all thy Sufferings, by thy blessed Passion and Death, to forgive me all my past Offences, by which I have most ungratefully provok'd the just Anger of my God; and now have such a merciful Compassion on my Weakness, that assisting me with thy Grace, I may pass thro' with Patience and Courage all those difficulties, whether of Soul or Body, thou shalt please to ordain for me: Permit me not to yield under any Temptation, or any ways be drawn in to Sin: that Grace thou hast purchas'd by thy Sufferings, is sufficient for all this, however weak I am of my self: 'tis in this I place all my Confidence, and now firmly hope, thou wilt so happily conduct me thro' my whole Life, that whatever hour I am call'd out of this World, I may be sensible of the good effect of thy Passion, and for ever rejoice in my Redeemer, who has died for me. *Amen.*

Easter-Day.

E P I S T L E.

1 Cor. 5. C. 6. V. 7.

Purge away the old leaven, that you may become a new lump. We are to rejoice this Day with our Lord, for his Victory over Death, and for his entering into a Life immortal. We are to joyn with the Church in her repeated Allelujahs, and endeavour, that no other comfort at this time, take place of this. The worldly Soul rejoices in sensible and worldly Comforts; but the True Christian, in the Glories of his Lord. This is the Day, our Lord has made, let us exult and rejoice in it. This is one condition requir'd; but for the worthy Celebrating this Festival, we are to use our best endeavours, for the adding another; that, which the Apostle here recommends, in requiring us to purge away the old leaven, and becoming every one of us, as it were a New lump. If we have the Spirit of the World so over-ruling us, that our Actions are directed by the violent impressions of Interest, Company, or whatever other satisfaction that draws

us from our Duty, we are very much unprepar'd for this Solemnity, and truly unlike what we ought to be. All this is the Old leaven, and must necessarily be purg'd away: for whoever has not advanc'd so far, in establishing God's Kingdom within his Soul, as to have there a Principle of duty, so prevailing over the interior Corruption, that the main Body of his Actions has not more in them of the Love of God, than of the World, more of Duty, than of the Old Leaven, truly such an one is short of that Character, which *St. Paul* says, belongs to the Good Christian: and this is no other, but that every true Pretender to Holiness, is not to be directed in his Life by Concupiscence or any worldly Passion, but by the sense of his Duty, and the direction of the Law of God. Thus ought all Christians be *Azimes*, as *S. Paul* advises. or *Unleaven'd*.

But when this Corruption is thus weaken'd, that it may be now truly said, not to command the Heart; yet something of it will still remain, which, on occasions, will break out, and infect many particular Actions; hence the best of Christians experience sometimes motions of Pride, Envy, Choler, Sadness, seeking themselves, and the Desire

Desire of Created goods: 'tis this Leaven, which thus remains, every Christian ought to labour by degrees, to purge away; and that none may be discourag'd, it ought to be remembred, 'tis an Exercise, that is to be the employment of our whole Lives. For this remaining Corruption, is as so many roots under Ground, which are ever shooting forth, and if, by continual pains, they are not kept down, they will encrease till they overgrow the Soul, and infecting the very Heart, will have it at command, and render it incapable of bringing forth good fruit. 'Tis indeed like the violence of a Torrent, which will carry us along with it, if we do not labour and courageously make up aganſt the ſtream. This is the Method of our living in this world. this the daily Taſk God has given us, And 'tis our common and indiſpenſable Duty, as ſoon as this Corruption begins firſt to appear, preſently to arm our ſelves aganſt it and endeavour its overthrow. Thus indeed our Life becomes a continual Mortification or Self-denial; and indeed ſo it ought to be, in all the Sincere Followers of Chriſt, who are ever to be crucifying the Fleſh, dying to Concupiſcence and its Deſires, and retrenching whatever may naturally

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ly, serve to feed or strengthen it.

But whilst this is the common obligation of all, is it not very surprising to see not only disorders amongst careless Christians, but likewise a want of mortification, as also variety of failings in those, who seem sincerely desirous of correcting them? and truly 'tis what is sufficient to convince them of their being wanting to their duty, if upon examining into their Conscience, they find there, they have not been diligent in watching over themselves, and making use of such means, as might be proper for their amendment; since all that, must then be charg'd on them, as the consequence of their indifferency and neglect.

Tho' I cannot but hope too, there are many Christians, who have a sincere desire of renouncing all whatever is in them displeasing to God, and pray daily for this end; and yet at the same time can observe no sensible amendment, but are still discovering new failings in themselves. This may easily be in well-meaning Souls, who labouring daily in the affairs of their Salvation, obtain by this means encrease of knowledge and inward light; this light makes them more discerning and quick-sighted than before.

before, and hence discovering more sins than formerly, they are inclin'd to fear, that they lose ground; that their devotions are fruitless, and are often drawn so far into the snare, as even to think of leaving them and returning to their former method; upon this, variety of diquieting thoughts raises a storm within them, and they stand in need of a skilful and prudent Director to preserve them from Shipwrack; whose care it ought to be, to make them sensible, that the faults, that trouble them, are not new; that the tepidity and negligence of their former life, was the occasion of their not seeing them at that time, or at least, being unconcern'd at them: that the discovering them now, is an evidence of their being advanc'd in the Spiritual way, and having a greater concern for their Salvation, than formerly, And if upon the view of them now, they frame a true judgment of their misery and weakness, sincerely humbling themselves at the consideration of the great distance they are from God; this Humility join'd with endeavours of reforming themselves, is certainly a great progress in a Christian life, and what ought to lay the foundation of solid comforts. For truly, as the condition of our state is here,

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the perfection of this life, is not so much in being free from all imperfections, as in the sincere desire of mastering them, and being humble under such failings, as we sincerely endeavour, and yet cannot overcome.

Let us then, as the Apostle advises, purge away the the old leaven, permitting no corruption in our selves, which is criminal or any ways likely to hazard our Salvation; and for other failings, it is to be the business of our lives, ever to strive against them; and in this, O Jesus, let it be the effect of thy Grace, that we hold on with patience, and fight with courage to the end.

Munday.

Easter-Week.

E P I S T L E.

Acts C. 10. V. 37. ends V. 43.

God rais'd him up the third day. Christ arising from the dead is our instruction at this time, that whoever pretends to be his Disciple, ought not to lie buried in the Grave of sin, but, with his Lord, rise to a life of Grace; obeying the Summons of St. Paul, *Arise thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ*

Christ will enlighten thee. None can be a true Disciple of Christ, who believes not what he teaches; neither can any one seriously judge himself his Disciple, if he do's not, what he commands. He commands thee now, O Christian, to awake and rise from Sin; if thou do'st it not, how do'st thou belong to him! For this end, the Church now calls on thee by Confession and a sincere repentance, to purifie thy Soul from all whatever can defile, and present it a pure Offering before God, if not without spot or blemish, at least so, that there be nothing, that can render thee unfit to accompany thy Lord. It may be easily known, how near thou art come to be this happy Soul, if thou consider'st thy self by St. Paul's measures: *If thou art risen with Christ, seek those things, which are above; set your affection on things above, not on things on Earth. Colos. 3. 1.* Not that a Christian is entirely to banish from his heart the thoughts of all Worldly things; this cannot be in this life, where our Duty in several ways, links us to this World; but that our heart be so possess'd with the love of God, that using this World, as circumstances require, our great Concern and Solitude in the main body of our actions be, how to perform the Will of God and work out our Salvation.

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This happy temper in a Soul carries it on powerfully and sweetly in the method of a Christian life; spurs it forward to seek and approve all such means, as are effectual for the uniting it more closely to its God, and taking all immoderate affections off the World; and if this be, by what the World calls Afflictions, Misfortunes or Disgrace, it cheerfully submits; not esteeming things, by their relish to flesh and blood; but as they contribute to the everlasting good and carry it forward to that end. On the other side, it endeavours to entertain with a sort of jealousy and dislike, whatever strengthens her affections to this World; and therefore what others generally call Blessings and Happiness, she apprehends as Dangerous; ever experiencing the satisfaction of Temporal things to be as a certain weight, which draws her down, and is still apt to remove her at a greater distance from her God. And then if she observes any violent inclinations within, or unhappy circumstances without, which are the occasions of her sin, her whole Care and Solitude is in taking the best advice and using such means, as are proper for securing her against such evils: she is neither tired in her most labourious endeavours, nor discourag'd at her own weakness, or the importunity of a troublesome

Some enemy ; but still goes on sighing and fighting for eternity, dragging those chains with patience, which are the punishment of her crimes, and waiting, when she shall be deliver'd from this her Captivity.

This is the method and these the marks of a Soul risen with Christ : and where these are not, I fear such a Soul go's not beyond the Ceremony of the Resurrection and Repentance. When a Christian seemingly sensible of his ill State, has confess'd and protested, that he is sorry for what is past, and now resolv'd to amend ; and yet afterwards pursues the former method of his Life, neither governing his Thoughts, nor moderating his Desires, nor observing his Words, nor declining the occasions of his Sin, nor taking his Heart off the World and its Snares ; such an one may have had thoughts of arising to a new Life, but lies still buried under the Earth, turns himself round in Corruption ; and if at the best, he gets up, 't's only like those Beasts, which rise out of the Mire to shake themselves, and so lie down again. And how far is this from truly seeking the things that are above ? *S. Peter* gives quite another character of a Christian arising from Sin ; requiring, that whoever thinks of this, should no longer live according to the

the Lusts of Men, but to the Will of God ; that the time past should be sufficient to have liv'd like Unbelievers, to have walk'd in Lasciviousness, in Lusts, in Excess of Wine, in Rioting and Drinking; and that now he would give his old Companions occasion of wonder, for not joyning with them, as formerly, in all their disorders and intemperance. 1 Pet. 4. 2. These would be most convincing marks of a new Life, to see men begin a new method, to see an entire Change from all former Extravagancies and Liberties, and wholly forsake that Company, which have been the encouragers and Witnesses of all their Iniquity : And as by their disorders they had before given scandal to good Men, and been occasion of their wonder and trouble; so now to give a like offence to the ill Ones, and make them revile at their unexpected Amendment. And truly where this is not in every repenting Sinner, in their degree, they have reason to suspect their fidelity : since true Repentance cannot be without a Change, nor any Amendment be, where every thing goes on as before. Deceive not then thy self any more, my Soul, for thou canst not deceive him, who is the Searcher of Hearts: and if at this time thou hast thoughts of Repenting, see it be accompanied

panied with a Change of thy self and with Amendment ; for otherwise, tho' Christ be risen, yet thou canst expect no part in the Resurrection of the Just.

Tuesday.

Easter-Week

E P I S T L E.

Acts 13. V. 26. ends V. 33.

G*O D* raised him from the Dead. Christ being risen from the Dead enter'd into a Life immortal and impassible, a new life, separated from Creatures, that had nothing common with the Corruption of the World; a Life disengag'd from the ties of created Objects, and wholly fix'd on God; a Life, which secur'd him from all the attempts of Malice, render'd him insensible of all Provocations, and put him into the Possession of an unchangeable Happiness. This Life is what at present ought to be the model of ours, in some degree at least; for otherwise we cannot hope to have benefitted by this holy Festival. The great occasion of our Sins, of our being at such a distance from God, and so much in love with the World, is because we are so easily in receiving impressions from sensible and worldly objects, and that we are
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so wholly unacquainted with every degree of impassibility, that truly every thing that presents it self to our Sense or Phancy, causes an alteration in us. Hence Interest, Ambition, and what ever delights, have such a command of the heart, that they draw it quite out of its Centre, disorder it with so many violent Motions, that eagerly following the World, it forgets its only Eternal Good: Hence every disappointment, misfortune or provocation brings darkness upon it, and destroys all interior Peace, that it becomes in some manner deaf to the dictates of Reason and Religion, and is only capable of being influenc'd by Passion! And thus by being too easy and sensible, as to every thing that delights or exasperates, it is brought to a precipice, and, upon the least motion, is ready to fall into all the depth of Sensuality, Melancholy and Fury; being in a disposition of being led along by the Devil, the World and the Flesh; and this is truly the Character and Temper of carnal and worldly Men: but how unlike that of a true Christian, who has begun a new Life, and is risen with Christ! For he, having fully possess'd his heart with the great Obligation and Interest he has in loving and obeying God, with the mean opinion of this World and all that

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is in it; that its flatteries and frowns are but very empty, light and nothing, if compar'd to Eternity; by this means arriv'd to such a degree of Impassibility, that tho' he is not become wholly insensible, yet approaches so near it, that he is little more than touch'd with those Objects, which are as a violence on others and draw them headlong out of the way. Hence it is, that tho' worldly, carnal and sensible things often present themselves to him, as Interest, Preferment, Esteem, and whatever is apt to gratify the Senses, yet they find him so hardned, that truly they make little or no impression on his Soul; 'tis much the same as to all the provocations of misfortune or malice; they cause in him a passing Surprise, but are not able to move him from that steddiness of mind, which being built on a Rock, on the foundation of Eternal Goods, cannot be much shaken with such insufferable blasts. 'Tis this inward firmness and constancy, which secures a Soul, and renders it not so very easy and susceptible of impressions from Creatures, and is truly a Christian quality very suitable to this great Solemnity, making us, as far as is agreeable to our State, resemble our Redeemer, in approaching to that Impassibility and Immortality, which are the glorious Endowments

ments of his Resurrection. For this reason it is, that as at this time, I pray to be deliver'd from a hard and Stony heart, so likewise I make it my daily Petition, that God would please to harden my heart, and render it still more and more obdurate against all the dangerous and distracting impressions of Creatures; that so being ever easy and ready in hearing and obeying God, this other Hardness may preserve me against all the Solicitation of created things, which otherwise affecting the heart, would likely draw it out of the way.

There's another quality in Christ risen from the dead, of which I earnestly desire to obtain some degree; and that is, as Christ in all those forty days between his Resurrection and Ascension, was never heard to speak either of *Pilate* or *Herod*, of *Judas* or the *Pharisees*, or even of that Infinite Glory, he then enjoy'd in his Soul; but the whole subject of his Discourse was to confirm and prepare his Apostles for their Charge. So truly I desire to retrench something of my unnecessary and unprofitable discourses, as perceiving, there's nothing serves more to feed and maintain our Passions than these. 'Tis Self-love puts us upon speaking of past troubles, because 'tis a satisfaction to us that they are past. 'Tis some remains of Hatred
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and ill-will makes us take pleasure in relating the malice and designs of our Enemies, and the advantages we had over them. 'Tis a vain complacence in the Happiness we enjoy, is the occasion of our so frequent Discourfing of it with delight: thus generally some ill Passion or other is the ground of what we say, and 'tis to humour, and gratify some weakness of our own, is the true end of most of our Discourses. This is very unlike the Example here given, which, tho' it be so perfect, that we cannot well expect to come up to it: yet truly, while we pretend to be Followers of Christ, and to live according to his Spirit, we ought not voluntarily indulge our selves in such ways, as are contrary to him, but ever strive to overcome our selves in all our Weaknesses, and if we cannot wholly master our Passions, at least 'tis our duty to be very watchful in moderating them. Help me, O Lord, by thy Grace, in this twofold Duty, that by the strength of a new Life, I may with constancy withstand all Temptations, and in all my Discourses seek nothing but thy Honour and my Eternal Good.



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